

County Council Regular Meeting: Oct. 13, 2015

Observers: Marcia Goldberg & Audrey Morris

This report contains member observations and selected highlights of a meeting of the Cuyahoga County Council and is not an official statement by the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. For the official disposition of all agenda items, consult the Cuyahoga County Council website at council.cuyahogacounty.us.

I. Introduction

This meeting was called to order by Council President Dan Brady at 5:10 p.m. and it was adjourned at 6:08 p.m. All were present.

Antecedents, Announcements & Public Comments

Before the regular meeting, County Executive Budish presented the Cuyahoga County 2016-2017 Biennial Budget Overview to the Committee of the Whole. Additionally, they discussed an agreement with First Merit Corp for \$10.3 million for 20-year naming rights for “First Merit Convention Center of Cleveland.” The sale was on second reading at today’s meeting and is scheduled to be voted on at the Oct. 27 meeting, but Council President Dan Brady said that the vote can be delayed if members have more questions.

Satinder Puri spoke in opposition to the Arts and Culture Excise Tax, Issue 8. He has demonstrated and noted that he is not getting any media coverage, which reflects the power that cultural institutions have. He noted that cultural institutions are well off and should not seek money from the vulnerable. Reverend Pinkney-Butz spoke about the decrease in mental health spending in the proposed budget and she passionately advocated for more care of the mentally ill and homeless. Two other people, who said they were homeless, one Ms. Lu, implored the Council to investigate conditions at a women’s homeless shelter and to not cut support from homeless people.

II. Business Transacted

* An appropriations resolution was replaced by a substitute resolution adopted unanimously. The resolution, normally a routine one that transfers budgeted money between accounts, was changed to remove \$6.2 million in funding for renovating the Halle Warehouse Building’s sixth floor, where the county plans to consolidate its archives. Mr. Greenspan wants the renovation to be considered in an “independent process of legislation.” He called the renovation a “sensitive piece of county operations.”

* Among resolutions adopted on second reading were these:

- \$2 million in 2014 county sales tax revenue bonds to pay for demolition of blighted and nuisance properties.
- An Economic Development Fund loan of \$685,000 to LaSalle AMC for the benefit of the LaSalle Arts and Media Center Project on East 185th St. The project will repurpose the former theater building as a neighborhood community center.
- \$672,000 to S.A. Comunale Co. to modify the sprinkler system in the Juvenile Justice Center. Mr. Gallagher said that a “design flaw” made the sprinklers a magnet for vandals.
- \$7.6 million in three separate awards to Harris Computer Corp. for software implementation, licenses, and maintenance services for the county’s Real Property Tax System for 5 years beginning this October 1.
- Acceptance of tax rates as determined by the Budget Commission (a routine annual requirement of the budgeting process).

* Resolutions on second reading, to be voted on at the Oct. 27 meeting included:

- The agreement mentioned above granting naming rights to the Convention Center.
- A Casino Revenue Fund loan of \$4 million for the May Co. Building Project (converting the former department store to an apartment building). The loan is contingent on the award of a state historic preservation tax credit. If the tax credit doesn't come through, the resolution will be moot. Mr. Schron, who heads the county's Economic Development & Planning committee, said that he would like to see this passed to help the revitalization of Public Square.
- \$4.6 million to Mark Schaffer Excavating & Trucking for Cuyahoga County Airport runway improvements in Richmond Heights.

* Items on first or second reading were referred to committees. They included:

- Adoption of the 2016-17 Biennial Operating Budget and Capital Improvements Program. Budget discussions will take place before the Committee of the Whole. So far, budget meetings are scheduled for 9 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 22; Friday, Oct. 23; and Thursday, Oct. 29.
- Plans to submit a 4.8-mill Health and Human Services renewal levy on the March 2016 Primary ballot. This was also referred to the Committee of the Whole.
- Other resolutions referred to the Committee of the Whole involved the issuance and sale of \$65 million in bonds for sports facilities and a \$4.3 million Casino Revenue Fund loan to Van Aken Shopping Center for the Van Aken Shopping Plaza project in Shaker Heights.
- County Executive appointments to the MetroHealth Board of Trustees, the county Public Defender Commission, and the county Audit Committee.
- \$1.18 million to the R.W. Clark Co. for ADA improvements to the county courthouse.
- A \$1.09 million contract with United Way of Greater Cleveland for fiscal agent services for emergency food purchases for county residents during the 2016 calendar year.
- \$1.2 million in extra funding and extending a contract with Mental Health Services of Homeless Persons for transitional housing program services.
- A \$2 million Casino Revenue Fund loan to Corning Place Ohio for the Garfield Building Project at 1965 East Sixth St. The project would convert the building to residential and mixed use office and retail space.

IV. Notes.

You can comb the whole budget or read an overview via Council's website, Council.CuyahogaCounty.us – scroll down to the “Featured Items” list on the right side of the home page. You can also read reporter Karen Farkas's article on the budget in the Oct. 14 issue of the Plain Dealer or on Cleveland.com.