

County Council Regular Meeting: Feb. 9, 2016

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 the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. For the official disposition of all agenda items, consult the county's website at council.cuyahogacounty.us.

I. Introduction

Council President Dan Brady called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. with all members present; the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

II. Antecedents, Announcements & Public Comment.

Mr. Brady opened the meeting by defending the proposed salary increase for Council members, which will be voted on at this meeting. He said that Council, whose role is defined in the county charter, balances the power of the county executive. Council members attend multiple committee meetings in addition to Council meetings, and the so-called “part-time” job requires more time than expected, he said.

County Executive Armand Budish talked about the county's recently completed Disparity Study. He said the results of the study show that more steps have to be taken to ensure inclusiveness in the granting of county contracts. So his office is introducing what he called a “robust set of initiatives to take steps toward fairness.” The four ordinances he referenced, introduced on first reading at this meeting and referred to Council's Public Works committee, allow set-asides for small businesses, the expansion of the county's Small Business Enterprise Program to set goals for minority- and women-owned businesses, a simplification of required paperwork, and the formation of a Business Economic Inclusion Program to encourage participation of targeted small businesses.

Four people, raising four different issues, asked for improvements to the programs and customer service offered by the county's Department of Health & Human Services.

III. Business Transacted

* Council voted 7-4 to increase members' annual compensation from \$45,000 to \$52,000 starting in 2019 (when, theoretically, no member of the current Council would be affected). Before the vote, Mr. Schron and Ms. Simon said that while they oppose the increase, they respect the opinion of the other members. Voting YES: Brady, Brown, Conwell, Germana, Hairston, Jones, Miller (all Democrats); voting NO: Gallagher, Greenspan, Schron, Simon (all Republicans except Simon). The legislation also calls for annual increases to Council members' pay beginning in 2020—the increase to be based on the percentage given to non-union county employees or on the percentage increase of the Consumer Price Index, whichever is less. The annual compensation of the Council president, currently \$55,000, will not increase in 2019, but the new legislation sets it at \$3,000 above that of other Council members.

* Other items adopted at today's meeting include the following:

- \$14 million for general computer system support through Dec. 31, 2020. Mr. Gallagher said that this contract “is a good one for the county.”
- \$3.2 million contract for the 2016 Sewer Repair Program. The contract impacts communities that use the county engineer.
- An amendment to the county’s contract for residential services for the Division of Children and Family Services. The amendment extends the end of the contract from June 30, 2015, to June 30, 2016, and increases funding by \$575,000.
- \$2.5 million to various providers of community-based family services. The providers include Beech Brook, Bellefaire, Catholic Charities Corp., and Cleveland Christian Home Inc.
- \$2.1 million to C&K Industrial Services for the maintenance of sanitary and storm sewer systems in various municipalities through 2018.
- \$600,000 to Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland for administration of the county’s Downpayment Assistance Program through February, 2017.
- A \$3 million Economic Development Fund Accelerated Growth Loan to Victory Midtown for a construction project at Victory Center, 7012 Euclid Ave. Mr. Schron explained that this loan is helping to pay for a parking garage for employees of Dealer Tire, a company that has committed to keeping its headquarters in Cleveland, thanks to this deal.
- A \$1.5 million Economic Development Fund Accelerated Growth Loan to HEC Properties for a dairy-facilities project at 2700 East 55th St.
- A \$2 million Economic Development Fund Large Scale Attraction Loan to W25d LLC to fund a construction project at West 25th Street and Detroit Avenue. Mr. Schron said that this project, which includes retail, housing, and education components, will bring back “another forgotten area of the city.”
- \$1.7 million. for general office supplies for various county departments through March 2018.

* Among other resolutions introduced and referred to committee (in addition to the inclusion initiatives noted in II above) are these:

- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Cleveland, the Metropolitan School District, and various other organizations in the county to work together on inclusion and economic development.
- Awards totaling \$1.5 million for municipal projects for the 2016 Community Development Block Grant Program. The grants cover projects in 10 communities, including University Heights and Fairview Park.