

County Council Regular Meeting: January 10, 2017

Observer: Grennetta Taylor

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 first regular County Council meeting of 2017 was called to order by re-elected Council President Dan Brady at 5 o'clock PM with all 11 Council members present.

II. Antecedents, Announcements & Public Comment. -- Miscellaneous New Year's greetings.

III. Business Transacted.

* Three items totaling approximately \$3 million were adopted on third reading after considerable discussion -- they concerned property tax software implementation, licenses and maintenance. They are amendments to existing contracts with N. Harris Computer Corporation and serve to provide updates to software and hardware to ensure the County property records and tax information are organized and assessable. The system will not be operational for the current billing period; but would be effective for the 2018 property tax billing cycle.

Councilman Gallagher voted no on all three resolutions; he noted that this is a no bid contract that was adopted in haste. He was not satisfied with answers provided during the committee meeting and believed the County had time to go out for bids. He further emphasized that his no vote should not be a reflection on the character or qualifications of the vendor.

Fiscal Officer Dennis Kennedy addressed questions from the Council and explained that they went no bid because the services were options in the existing contract with N. Harris Computer Corp. and it will allow all of the databases to interface with each other. The current system is unsupported.

Several Council member seemed to be surprised that it was a no bid contract but agreed to vote yes to expedite efficiency which was the best thing for the Auditor's office.

* Several items were delayed by the holiday recess and were therefore fast-tracked for second reading adoption by suspension of the rules. Most important were these:

-- \$1.9 million in additional revenue expected from the Cleveland Municipal Court. This is a renewal of the previous contract with the City of Cleveland to provide legal services to indigent persons who have criminal cases before the court. The County plans to re-negotiate the terms of the contract for 2017. This is a revenue generating contract: City reimburses the County for legal services provided; the County invoices the City monthly. The Law Director, Robert Triozzi answered questions from the Council to explain the term of the contract and how the City was billed for services.

-- \$4.3 million extra for office space for Westside Neighborhood Family Services

-- \$13.5 million for continued construction of the Towpath Trail, Stage 3. Council President Brady mentioned that this project is 90% Federally funded.

* An ordinance, creating an Animal Abuse Registry for those convicted of cruelty to animals, was read again and will come up for a final decision at the January 24th meeting. The registry will be used to prevent such persons from adopting animals or holding positions of responsibility for animals.

* The appointment of Pam Bobst, Rocky River Mayor and League of Women Voters Member, to serve on the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission representing the Westshore Region, was read again and will also be decided at the next meeting.

* Resolutions introduced and referred to committee included the following:

-- Yet another appointment to the County Audit Committee, which is an important and independent piece of ethics enforcement in the new County Government structure.

-- \$7 million for the resurfacing of Bagley Road.

-- \$1.9 million for operation of the Oriana House's Re-Entry Resource Center

* The Appointment of Valerie Harry as Director of Internal Auditing was withdrawn, at the request of the Co. Audit Committee. No explanation was given.

IV. Notes.

County Council is now re-organized for the next biennium. Mr. Brady and Mr. Jones will continue to serve as President and Vice President, respectively, and new members Nan Baker (District #1) and Scott Tuma (District #4) are replacing Dave Greenspan and Chuck Germana respectively. The two outgoing Council members are both League members. The standing committees of Council will be chaired as follows:

Community Development: Anthony Hairston, District 10

Council Operations and Intergovernmental Relations: Pernel Jones Jr., District 8

Economic Development and Planning: Jack Schron, District 6

Education, Environment and Sustainability: Sunny Simon, District 11

Finance and Budgeting: Dale Miller, District 2

Health, Human Services and Aging: Yvonne Conwell, District 7

Human Resources, Appointments and Equity: Shontel Brown, District 9

Public Safety and Justice Affairs: Michael Gallagher, District 5

Public Works, Procurement and Contracting: Scott Tuma, District 4

Regular County Council meeting will continue to be on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every Month, at 5 PM o'clock.