

## **County Council Regular Meeting: February 14, 2017**

Observer: Lesley Hahn

*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](http://council.cuyahogacounty.us)*

### **I. Introduction.**

The regular County Council meeting was called to order by Council President Dan Brady at 5 o'clock p.m. with all Council members present, including newly elected members Nan Baker, District #1, and Scott Tuma, District #4. The meeting was finally adjourned at 7 o'clock p.m.

### **II Antecedents, Announcements & Public Comment.**

This segment occupied one and a half hours of the meeting and was covered by in more detail by Karen Farkas in the Plain Dealer on Wednesday, February 15, Page A-4. About two-thirds of the crowd of more than 200 who attended this meeting were members of the Greater Cleveland Congregations, a non-partisan coalition representing 100,000 people from 43 congregations and partner organizations, opposing a proposed plan to issue bonds and thereby commit substantial tax dollars to renovate The Q, home of the Cleveland Cavaliers. This plan was not adopted today but will be discussed further at three Committee of the Whole meetings beginning Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. A member of the GCC assured me that their members would be present at each meeting. President Brady commented that it was the largest crowd he had ever seen assembled at a County Council meeting.

Opponents of the plan and the bond issue urged the Council to spend instead for neighborhood re-development or Metrohealth renovation, pointing out that tax dollars had already been directed to downtown (especially Gateway) and Playhouse Square projects. One spokesperson requested that approval be postponed pending more detailed information and further requested formation of a Community Equity Fund for neighborhood revitalization with funding equal to the County's contributions to The Q renovation. Questions were also raised whether other sports teams would make similar requests and whether the Cavs would move if they got a new owner or a better deal elsewhere.

Proponents included businessmen, union leaders and arena employees who pointed out that Q owner Dan Gilbert had made many charitable contributions to Cleveland youths and had abided by County rules requiring minority participation in construction and employment.

According to the Plain Dealer, the plan calls for a total cost of \$282 million over 17 years. County taxes would pay for 160 million of that amount to service bonded debt over

that period, while the Cavs would pay \$122 million through increased rent payments, the city of Cleveland would provide more than \$88 million, through its admissions tax on tickets to events at The Q, and more than \$44 million would come from Destination Cleveland's budget. The article stated no new taxes would be required.

### **III. Business Transacted**

\* The above targeted resolution was nevertheless read for the first time and referred to the Committee of the Whole for extended discussion. It would authorize the issuance and sale of County revenue bonds "in an aggregate principal amount that will generate net proceeds of \$140 million, for the purpose of paying or reimbursing the costs of reconstructing, refurbishing, renovating, upgrading, improving and equipping Quicken Loans Arena."

\* Three collective bargaining agreements involving 2887 employees were discussed in executive session prior to the public meeting and approved with suspension of the rules.

\* Appointments to the County Planning Commission, Regional Sewer Trustees, County Library Trustees and Cuyahoga Community College Board of Trustees were referred to committee.

\* Awards for resurfacing Turney Road, repair and resurfacing of Sprague Road, resurfacing Noble Road and replacement of Avery Road Bridge in Broadview Heights were also referred to committee.

\* Other resolutions were referred to appropriate committees, including an award for environmental consulting services, an agreement with Chagrin Valley Dispatch Council for a 5-year countywide criminal justice data sharing program, additional funds for a 2-year provision of safe shelter care for homeless men and women, additional funds for various providers of the Tapestry Care program, and \$1.3 million to Metrohealth for 1,899 children in the Pediatric Foster Care Joint Program.

\* Increases of \$17.7 million to Caremark and \$7 million to Medical Mutual were also referred to committee. These costs of group healthcare benefits include both county employees and municipal employees in 59 communities under a regionalization program.