

County Council Regular Meeting: May 9, 2017

Observer: Lynda Mayer

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 meeting was called to order at 5pm by Council President Brady, with all Council members present. It adjourned at 6:10pm. County Executive Budish reported to Council that the MetroHealth bonds went on sale today, and they were not only all sold immediately but actually oversubscribed. That means the modernization project can proceed as planned.

Among five public comments which followed, the first two concerned the Board of Elections contract with Tenex Software Solutions for its new electronic pollbooks. The first speaker, representing the VOTEC system which did not make the final cut, warned that the Tenex tablets may not comply with requirements set by the Help America Vote Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The second, a blind man, testified that the Tenex system is not accessible to handicapped persons.

The other three public comments concerned problems with services and grievance procedures at the Norma Herr Women's Shelter on Payne Avenue. They claimed that repeated complaints about the same employees and issues had not been heard and that no further contract with those managers should be signed until a third party was appointed to make a transparent assessment. Both of these topics received Council attention, as reported below.

II. Business Transacted.

* A \$3.3 million contract with Tenex Software Solutions was approved, for the purchase of electronic pollbooks and their required support over the next 10 years. The Director of the County Board of Elections spoke to the concerns voiced by the previous critics, explaining that it is the actual balloting technology that must conform to HAVA and ADA standards -- that the pollbooks are operated only by the pollworkers, not the voters. He spoke highly of the small trial conducted in a recent Chagrin Falls special election and of the still limited May 2nd Primary Election roll-out of the equipment. He noted improved ease and speed of getting voters to the right precincts and into the booths with their ballots. He also reported pollworker enthusiasm, doubting the motives of the previous critics who favored another company's product.

* The \$8.4 million contract to two providers of emergency homeless shelter services was returned to the Health and Human Services Committee in response to the complaints by three critics reported above. The problems cited pertained to the women's shelter, managed by Mental Health Services for Homeless Persons Inc., but the women said that the much larger men's shelter may well have some of the same issues. The men's shelter, at 2100 Lakeside Avenue, is managed by Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry.

* The routine budget adjustment resolution this time contained the property demolition funds requested by the Land Bank, according to Mr. Miller. Ms. Simon explained there had been much funding delay for a project in her community of South Euclid.

* \$3.4 million was approved for a total of 28 Community Social Services programs by 40 municipalities or neighborhood service agencies.

* \$14.9 million was awarded for the rehabilitation of the Highland Road Bridge over Euclid Creek in the city of Euclid.

* \$42.8 million in additional funds were approved for a total of 40 providers of foster care services, extending the time period through the end of 2017.

* \$1.3 million in additional funds were approved for the rehabilitation of the Columbus Road Lift Bridge over the Cuyahoga River in the city of Cleveland.

* An amendment was introduced to the previous \$68 million contract with Cleveland Public Power (CPP) authorizing a Solar Project at 9400 Memphis Ave. in the city of Brooklyn. This was a “walk-on” item presented in person by Mike Foley, Director of the Department of Sustainability. The resolution states that “CPP desires to support the County’s participation in the Solar Project and Project Icebreaker (the off-shore wind farm) by purchasing energy from both projects...” The resolution was referred to Ms. Simon’s Education, Environment & Sustainability Committee.

* Other resolutions introduced and referred to committees included these:
-- The dedication as public streets of several land parcels in the Flats East Bank and in the Schady Reserve Subdivision of Olmsted Township;
-- \$5.5 million for the 5-year extension of a leased office space at 8111 Quincy Avenue; and
-- A \$5.9 million revenue-generating agreement with University Hospitals for lease of part of the County Medical Examiner’s Building at 11011 Cedar Avenue.