

## **County Council Regular Meeting: June 24, 2014**

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 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.**

President C. Ellen Connally called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. All other Council members were present. The meeting ended just after 6 p.m.

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

- Ms. Connally thanked two longtime county employees who are retiring, David Reines and Joseph Gauntner.
- County Executive's Announcements: Mr. Fitzgerald also thanked the retiring employees and then told Council about a new jointly sponsored program to support small businesses. The county is providing \$750,000 from its Western Reserve Fund (for economic development) to the program, which is also sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Urban League, and the two municipalities where businesses will initially be helped: Cleveland and Shaker Heights. The program is in its "pilot" phase now and will be reevaluated in two years. New or established small businesses accepted into the program must provide their own equity, develop business plans, and qualify for SBA-backed bank loans. Mr. Fitzgerald had attended a press conference about the program earlier in the day and said the undertaking has a "lot of potential and promise."

### **III. Business Transacted**

- Seven resolutions, proposed charter amendments, were referred to the Committee of the Whole. The seven involve: residency requirements for elective offices; issues related to independence of the sheriff's office; the timeline of the appointment process and the commencement of the term of future Charter Review Commissions; establishing an Agency of Inspector General; establishing an Investment Advisory Committee; changing the composition of county boards and commissions to ensure independence of judgment; and removing party affiliation from elected county office. Mr. Greenspan said that these seven, plus another related to voting rights, would be discussed by the committee at meetings on Wednesday, July 2, 9 a.m.-noon; Monday, July 7, 1:30-5:30 p.m.; and Thursday, July 17, 1:30-5 p.m. The schedule is tight, he said, because the proposed amendments must have their third reading by the second Council meeting in August to make it onto the November ballot.
- Delayed for two weeks was consideration of an ordinance amending the county code to establish a "more consistent approach to compensation" for county non-bargaining employees. The ordinance was prompted by Council's displeasure with the fact that the courts—without giving notice to County Council or considering the county's budget—gave their non-bargaining employees a 3 percent raise last year. But just before today's meeting, Council members received a letter from four top county judges saying the proposed

ordinance would be unconstitutional because of the separation of powers. Mr. Gallagher was livid, complaining that the judges knew about the proposed ordinance last October and not one of them ever showed up at a Council committee meeting where it was discussed or at one of the three Council meetings where the ordinance was read. And Mr. Miller said that the language of the ordinance had already been changed to make notice of any proposed raises a “request” rather than a requirement. But Ms. Connally urged delay to avoid antagonizing the judges, and Council went along. Mr. Gallagher said he would hold another committee meeting on Tuesday, July 8, at 1 p.m. but did not expect anyone from the courts to show up.

- Passed on third reading were: 1) a resolution appointing Donald N. Jaffe and reappointing Berj A. Shakarian and Jerry L. Young to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument Board. Ms. Connally said the board has funds available to remedy recent vandalism to the monument. 2) an ordinance establishing a policy for any requests for new programs that require an additional appropriation either during the budget process or during the year; the policy requires detailed information about unexpected requests because, Mr. Greenspan said, too many requests are being made without enough backup information. Ms. Simon voted against the ordinance, saying accountability could be required without legislation.
- Passed unanimously on second reading under suspension of rules: 1) a routine and state-required resolution adopting the “annual tax budget.” 2) a resolution awarding KeyBank \$962,829 for banking services; and 3) a resolution making awards totaling \$832,000 to various providers of programs supporting the county’s Fatherhood Initiative—a program to help all fathers in the county and to strengthen their role in families.
- Resolutions referred to committee following first reading: 1) increased funding for Playhouse Square streetscape improvements from \$3.68 million to \$4 million; 2) an award of \$3 million to Terrace Construction Co. for sewer repairs; 3) an award of \$240,000 to One Community for Internet service and fiber maintenance services for the period July 1, 2014, to Dec. 31, 2018; and 4) an award of about \$3 million to various providers for Workforce Investment Act Youth Training for the period July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015.
- Ordinances referred to committee following first reading: 1) establishing a Social Impact Financing Fund to pay for contracts to improve outcomes and lower costs for contracted government services; Ms. Connally complained that she has listened carefully to explanations of this program and still couldn’t understand it; Mr. FitzGerald said at future committee meetings he would make sure the program was explained more clearly, but that it’s an innovative program that helps government agencies save money by using earlier intervention. 2) establishing procedures for setting the fee structure for sheriff’s department background checks; and 3) authorizing extension of the Capital Improvement Bed Tax shared with the City of Cleveland.