

## **County Council Regular Meeting: August 12, 2014**

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**

This was the first meeting to be held in the new Cuyahoga County Administration Building at East 9<sup>th</sup> and Prospect. The new council chamber is spacious and allows for many more observers. The meeting was called to order a few minutes after 5:00 p.m. and adjourned at 6:52 p.m. by Council President C. Ellen Connally. All Council members were present.

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

LWV Greater Cleveland President Maryann Barnes spoke to the Council urging support to place on the ballot in November two amendments to the County Charter: the Voting Rights amendment and the amendment making permanent the office of Inspector General, commenting that doing so was a tool to provide for clean government and that failure to place this issue on the ballot would send a message that the Code of Ethics would not be vigorously enforced.

In response to the recent environmental catastrophe in western Lake Erie that caused a shutdown of the Toledo water system, County Executive Ed FitzGerald reported on a meeting of stakeholders regarding water quality of Lake Erie near Cleveland. Director of Regionalism Schofield was directed to look into whether a similar problem could affect the Cuyahoga County area and what would be the response. An exercise by the emergency response team will be conducted on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **III. Business Transacted**

\* Seven proposed County Charter amendments were brought before Council on third reading for adoption, but only three of them received the requisite eight votes needed to put them before the voters in November:

- An amendment to extend the time by three months to appoint the Charter Review Commission
- An amendment to change the composition of the County Audit Committee to insure its independence.
- An amendment declaring the Right to Vote and authorizing the County to take measures to protect and preserve it. The three opponents (Messers. Schron, Gallagher and Greenspan) made the point that the subject may be largely symbolic as it will probably be challenged in court.

\* Two remaining amendments were tabled until the August 26th meeting:

- A modification of the residency requirements for County Executive and Council members.
- An amendment to fill vacancies in the office of the County Executive by special election.

\* The other two remaining amendments failed to get the required super-majority of 8 votes:

- An amendment to make permanent the office of Inspector General. It failed although it received 6 of 11 YES votes. Opposition to this amendment was vigorous, and Councilman Gallagher noted that the

current Inspector General was apparently looking at live feed of security cameras in County facilities for reasons yet unknown. Voting against the measure were Mr. Gallagher, Ms Conwell, Ms. Connally, Mr. Jones and Mr. Hairston.

-- An amendment giving extra independence to the office of Sheriff. Councilman Miller reported that the language makes it unclear to what extent the Sheriff would be subject to the County Executive and further that he considered the present wording to be adequate. The measure failed by a vote of 3-8.

\* Receiving first readings and referred to committees were three ordinances:

- A County Executive Transition Act
- Establishment of a Department of Sustainability
- Fee structure for animal shelter dog adoptions

\* Receiving first readings and referral to committees were thirteen resolutions, among them:

-- Appointment of an agent to purchase up to \$25 million in hotel furnishings, fixtures, operating supplies and equipment for the new Convention Center hotel

-- A \$2 million amendment to a consultant engineering services contract for construction of Stage 3 of the Towpath Trail Extension from Steelyard Commons to Tremont Trailhead

-- An award to the purchaser and servicing agent for the sale of tax lien certificates, possibly in an amount exceeding \$25 million.

\* A Collective Bargaining Agreement with AFSCME, the union covering 1,158 employees in the Departments of Health and Human Services and Public Works was approved. Mr. FitzGerald reported that this agreement was consistent with negotiations with other unions and included the lion's share of covered county employees.

\* Five awards were approved:

-- Up to \$4.3 million to AT&T Corporation for Voice over Internet Protocol for a 4.5-year service period

-- A revenue generating agreement with the City of Cleveland to operate a Family Justice Center at 75 Erieview Plaza. It will be named for Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Ronald Adrine.

-- Amendments to contracts extending the time periods and providing additional funds with Applewood Centers and Ohio Guidestone for treatment-based services for juveniles to keep them out of jail.

-- \$1 million to Pro-Tech Systems Group for the County's data acquisition system for five-years.

-- \$10 million to lease space for ten years at Halle Industrial Park on East 40<sup>th</sup> Street to house the county archives, which passed as amended. Finally these archives will have a home! President Connally stated that she intended to form an advisory committee for caretaking of the archives.

\* Lastly, three ordinances were considered.

-- An act governing the use of financial transaction devices for payment of County expenses

-- An act establishing a fee structure for Sheriff's Department background checks (passed)

-- An extension of the Bed Tax with an amendment requiring annual reporting. This tax benefits the City of Cleveland and Positively Cleveland, has been approved by a majority of local mayors and has engendered no opposition. The measure passed.