

County Council Regular Meeting: Oct. 28, 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

I. Introduction

President Connally called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. All council members were present, along with County Executive Edward FitzGerald. The meeting ended at 7:18 p.m.

II. Antecedents, Announcements or Public Comment

A Committee of the Whole meeting prior to the Regular Meeting listened to Jeffrey Applebaum give a progress report on the Global Center for Health Innovation (Med Mart) and the Inclusion Program involving the operation of the Downtown Cleveland Convention Center.

Several people, including four local clergy spoke at the onset of the agenda in favor of the establishment of a Department of Sustainability to provide better living conditions in the city and to enable Cleveland to become a green city. See disposition below.

Council President Connally presented to the C.E.O. of the domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center a proclamation to commemorate October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, noting that domestic violence is the number one reason for police calls in the city of Cleveland and in most suburbs.

County Executive FitzGerald said that U.S. Secretary of H.U.D. Julián Castro was in Cleveland at the City Club today discussing early childhood education and recognizing how well the county has cooperated with the city of Cleveland.

III. Business Transacted

* Two Resolutions of Council were adopted after second or third reading:

- Appointment of Harriet Shaw Applegate to serve on the Port Authority Board of Directors;
- Additional funds to hire two employment experts to improve applications and methods of hiring;

* An ordinance establishing a Department of Sustainability was approved unanimously after third reading. Several councilpersons commented favorably, its mission being to collaborate with other municipalities, establish plans, and assist in grant writing. It was co-sponsored by 7 Democratic Councilpersons. Councilwoman Simon reported that this ordinance received several hearings and the signatures of over 2,000 of supporters. In addition, five other ordinances establishing administrative processes received committee referrals or second readings.

* Several resolutions were introduced by County Executive FitzGerald and referred to committees, including these high ticket projects or bond issues:

- c. \$2 million for the design and construction of an Emergency Operations Center in Broadview Heights;
- \$10 million in tax revenue bonds for a pedestrian bridge between Mall C and the lakefront over the existing railroad tracks;
- \$35.8 million in tax revenue bonds for County Sewer District Improvement Bonds;

- \$168 million in tax revenue bonds for maintenance of seven different county-owned buildings, including the Justice Center;
- \$21 million in tax-exempt economic development bonds for the Medical Mart/Convention Center Project;
- \$24.5 million in economic development bonds from the Western Reserve fund for un-named projects.

* Awards for group healthcare benefits were also introduced: over \$40 million to Caremark PCS Health, \$116 million to Medical Mutual of Ohio, and over \$68 million to United Healthcare Services.

* Several resolutions involving collaboration and regionalism were approved, with FitzGerald noting that, although we may not be able to effect merging of municipalities, we have seen real progress in assisting communities in outsourcing services to a larger entity at real cost savings:

- An agreement with Oakwood village (the 35th community to sign up) for maintenance and repair of storm sewers, sanitary sewers and water lines;
- Agreements with the Cities of Chardon (not in Cuyahoga County!) and Cleveland Heights (13 participants) for participation in the Cuyahoga County Benefits Regionalization Program.

* A contract with Pay for Success of \$5 million was adopted, for an intervention program for children in foster care and homeless families of children in foster care for the next five years. Councilman Miller stated that this program could save the county money as it helped to reunite families and reduced the time children spent in foster care.

* A \$50 million Demolition Fund was unanimously adopted, while eliciting a multitude of comments. This will fund the demolition of 5,000 blighted properties; however, it is estimated that \$125 to \$250 would eventually be needed, so four out of every five applications would be turned down. Councilman Shron's amendment to establish a new body, based on the model of the Clean Ohio fund, was rejected. Councilman Jones' amendment was adopted to allow Council to establish a Property Demolition Oversight Committee to supervise the program as administered by the executive and the Land Bank. Interest-free loans would be extended to worthy applicants; after the loan was repaid the property owner would be entitled to receive a grant in the amount of one half the original value of the loan. The ordinance was adopted as amended.