

County Council Regular Meeting: January 27, 2015

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 Brady called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. All Council members were present except Mr. Schron, who was out of town. His absence was excused. The meeting ended at 6:35 p.m.

II. Antecedents, Announcements or Public Comment.

Satinder Puri made his third appearance before council to protest the proposed \$25 Million pedestrian bridge as being unnecessary, pointing out that access to the lakefront is available via West Third and East Ninth streets. A better use of these funds, he suggested, would be improvement of impoverished neighborhoods.

Thomas Colaluca, Chairman of the Personnel Review Commission, spoke in opposition to a proposed Ordinance amending the Cuyahoga County Code, claiming it would conflict with the County Charter, which gives policy and procedural authority to the PRC. The Commission was included in the Charter to prevent corruption and favoritism, he argued, and should not be limited in any way.

County Executive Armond Budish commended Sheriff Frank Bova for recently being named the 2014 Person of the Year by the County Police Chiefs Association; noted a new collaboration to promote diversion programs in the Juvenile Court; and praised a health conference which awarded \$100,000 to combat the epidemic rise of the use of heroin.

III. Business Transacted

* Establishment of a new Council committee, to be called the Community Development Committee, to give Council oversight of demolition of vacant structures, was introduced and passed under suspension of the rules. Then an Ordinance to include community development as an allowable use for the Casino Revenue Fund and to establish a County Community Development Supplemental Grant Fund Program was given first reading and referred to this new committee.

* All but one of the Councilpersons present voted in favor of an ordinance setting forth the qualifications and other information for all County appointees, which Councilman Greenspan said would ensure transparency and equity across all county appointees. Only Councilwoman Simon opposed, stating that salary information should not be disclosed because (1) such information may not be available at the time of appointment and (2) that release of personal information (such as residence address) may discourage qualified candidates.

* Confirmation of two County Executive appointments, that of Nailah K. Byrd as Clerk of Courts and Edward H. Kraus as Director for Regional Collaboration was introduced and referred to Committee of the Whole (on February 10 and February 24 respectively).

* A resolution was introduced, for \$1 million for preventative maintenance at the Justice Center and Juvenile Justice Center, over a three-year period.

* Funding for a pedestrian bridge connecting the Cleveland Convention Center to Lake Erie was approved, despite arguments in opposition from Councilman Anthony Hairston. (Coverage of this issue was extensive by the Plain Dealer in both its January 12 issue on Council's Finance & Budgeting Committee approval and the January 28 issue on final approval from Council.) Total cost of the bridge will be \$25 Million, with the County contributing \$10 million, another \$10 million to come from the City of Cleveland and \$5 million from the State of Ohio. Council's approval is contingent upon actual deposit of the City's funds and resolution of ownership issues and responsibility for maintenance. None the less, the project is on a fast-track for completion before the Republican National Convention, according to the Plain Dealer. Speaking in favor of approval, Councilman Pernell Jones was quoted as saying "We're striving to be a convention center town," and "there's a desire to create a more family-oriented atmosphere in our downtown area," both of which would be enhanced by further access to the lakefront. Council President Dan Brady, before voting for the bridge, acknowledged criticism, but noted that former executive Ed FitzGerald made commitments (as did Council). In the final vote all were for approval with the exception of Councilman Hairston; construction should commence in ninety days.

* In routine business millions of dollars worth of awards were made to various municipalities, providers and county offices for various community social services programs for the next two years. The largest of these were the following:

- \$2.8 million to nineteen providers for development, transportation and meals
- \$2.2 million to five providers for residential treatment services for the Youth and Family Community Partnership Program.
- \$1.4 million for traditional residential treatment services to sixteen different providers

* An award of \$234,000 was made to the City of Strongsville on behalf of the Southwest Emergency Dispatch Center. It was noted that Parma and Chagrin Falls are expected to soon join similar collaborative systems.

* Authorization agreements with seven municipalities for participation in the Cuyahoga County Benefits Regionalization Program were approved. Three of these municipalities are new: Southeastern Emergency Communications Center, City of South Euclid and Regional Income Tax Agency.

* An ordinance was passed, the Administrative Procedures Act (this was the ordinance opposed by Tom Colaluca), to provide a uniform set of rules for procedures and policies with practical significance. The Law Director said this is permissive, not prohibitive legislation; it allows deviations where the agency comes before County Council.

* A two-week extension of time was approved for applying for a dog license. This was in response to an earlier error in which the County sent three copies of the dog license application to some residents and none to others.

* A settlement in a court case filed by the administrator of the Estate of Albert Fabian was approved without comment. According to the Plain Dealer, this settlement had been discussed in executive session just prior to the Council meeting. The basis of the case was the excessive use of force by police.