

Cleveland Heights City Council Overview,
Based on meeting reports from October to April.
Some relevant League policy positions are indicated in italics.

Economic Development (*see LWVGC policy positions 2021-2022-Planning, Transportation, and Land Use*)

Financing of the Cedar/Lee/Meadowbrook development was finalized, the last step before construction starts. (2/13 & 2/21)

City-owned parcels (1.91 acres) on Noble Rd. (between Woodview and Greyton) were sold to TWG Development to construct affordable housing. (12/16)

Taylor Tudor redevelopment: WXZ Development is redeveloping the buildings on South Taylor between Superior and Taylor Road Synagogue; a combination of 1st floor commercial space and rental housing above and, in early stage, additional development of surrounding area. Nearly \$6M in historic tax credits were awarded by the state.

Park Synagogue redevelopment – not a city project: September 21, Council’s Planning and Development Committee heard a presentation by Sustainable Community Associates about the plan to convert the former synagogue into a space for arts, education, wellness, and nonprofit organizations; later phases include housing and more. The city will contribute \$45,000 to assist placing the building on the National Register of Historic Places (1/17)

Severance Town Center: In November, the Future Heights Severance Action Group presented its ideas to council’s Committee of the Whole (COW). In January, a Vision Statement was adopted by the Board of Control. This is a high-level statement of aspirations (e.g., intentional city center with a mix of civic, green, and other uses).

City-owned building (Hillside Dairy) on Warrensville Center just north of Mayfield was declared a blighted property and a consultant was hired to prepare environmental assessments—necessary to demolish the building, redevelop the site, and apply for brownfield cleanup grants (2/13)

Housing (*see LWVGC policy positions 2021-2022 - Housing*)

Upon recommendation of the Racial Justice Task Force, council removed sunset date from pay-to-stay legislation, making it permanent (11/7)

Lead safe certification - To reduce the risk of lead poisoning, residential rental units built before 1978 will be required to be certified as lead-safe in order for owners to obtain a rental occupancy permit. It would be enforced by the Cleveland Heights Building Commissioner. Violations would be minor misdemeanors. Scheduled to take effect in June. (10/17)

Several properties were transferred to Future Heights for rehabilitation and resale (11/7)

Recreation (*see LWVGC policy positions 2021-2022 - Public Recreation*)

The community center ice rinks have been closed for much of the winter and spring. While this is an issue that directly effects only a subset of our community, the persistent, passionate, comprehensive, and civil engagement that the skating community organized is, we think, a model for local government advocacy.

Also in recreation, dogs are now permitted in all city parks. They must be on a leash no more than 6 feet and cleaned up after. They may not enter playground areas, tennis and basketball courts, ball fields, picnic shelters, swimming pool premises, splash parks, community gardens, sledding hills, or areas planted with flowers, shrubs, or decorative vegetation. The mayor may prohibit dogs during public events provided signs are erected during the prohibited times. (3/6)

Advocacy

Council expressed concerns about delays in United States Postal Service mail delivery and also expressed appreciation to postal carriers working long hours due to staffing shortages. (01/17)

Council opposed Senate Bill 1, which would transfer most powers and duties of the State Board of Education to the Governor (2/21)

Council opposed the Ohio Legislature's House Bill 1, that cuts and flattens Ohio's income tax rates and eliminates \$1.2 billion annually in state payments to local governments (3/6)

Council expressed support of Ohio Senate Bill 36, which permits prospective owner-occupants and specified non-profit housing organizations to match winning bids at sheriff's sales to purchase one- to four-unit foreclosed residential properties. (4/17)

Transportation & Infrastructure (*see LWVGC policy positions 2021-2022-Planning, Transportation, and Land Use*)

Speed limits were reduced from 35 to 25 mph on Noble and North Taylor north of Monticello, Lee Rd, and sections of Euclid Heights Blvd & South Taylor) (11/21)

Funds have been appropriated and necessary agreements are being completed for traffic signal modifications and curb ramp upgrades on Monticello Blvd. (2/21)

Work continues on sewer replacement & repair to comply with the EPA consent decree. This necessitates multiple council actions approving funding and professional services agreements.

Much city business is bread-and-butter decisions. Examples this year include lots of equipment purchases including a compactor for the transfer station, four hybrid police vehicles, six electric vehicles for various departments, pick-up trucks, and backhoes. These decisions don't make headlines or generate controversy. But if you've ever worked at a job where you struggled with obsolete and barely-functional tools, you can appreciate the impact of new equipment on city staff. And, in turn, on city services.

Personnel

Josie Moore resigned from council in December. When council was unable to agree on an appointment by the charter-imposed deadline, Mayor Seren appointed Janine Boyd.

Andrew Unetic was hired as director of finance (10/3)

Joe McRae resigned as director of parks and recreation in October and Kelly Ledbetter was hired as his replacement in February.

City Administrator Joe Sinnott resigned after one year in the newly created position (3/20)

Speaking of city staff, council approved 2% across the board raises. (3/20)

Other

Council established a Charter Review Commission to review the entire city charter; 9 members will be selected from a pool of 27 applicants. Council appears ready to make the appointments at its first May meeting. (12/5, 4/17) (*see LWVGC policy positions 2021-2022-Charter Review*)

Council worked with the mayor on a transparent 2023 budget process. Among other things in that budget are additional housing inspectors, a coordinator of a mayor's action center to improve communication with residents, a sustainability coordinator, and a splash pad for Denison Park

In Process

ARPA funds allocation: Results of the ARPA community surveys were reported at the 2/21 Committee of the Whole (CoW) meeting. At the 2/27 CoW meeting the mayor briefly described eight programs for which ARPA funds might be used. This was not a detailed proposal but a preliminary draft indicating priorities and directions for ARPA funds, to begin a conversation with council.

Ms. Larson's Public Safety and Health Committee is exploring a sidewalk repair program and a sidewalk snow removal program.

Mr. Mattox's Planning and Development Committee is working on an appraisal gap financing program.

Revisions to the zoning and building codes are under consideration (private parking garages, driveway widths, fences, window transparency, rain barrels and gardens, non-conformities, public notice requirements, and fees). The ordinance will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and council's Planning and Development committee. A public hearing will be held. (02/21)

Mr. Cuda's Housing and Building committee is considering issues related to short-term rentals and apartment access for voter registration drives and election campaigns.

LWV observers: Jill Tatem and Blanche Valancy