

County Council Special Meeting, Aug. 4, 2020
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.

I. Introduction.

This meeting was live-streamed on the county's YouTube channel. Members of the public must email comments to Jeanne Schmotzer, council clerk, before the meeting. Council president Dan Brady called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.; it ended at 2:55 p.m. All Council members were present.

II. Antecedents, Announcements, and Public Comment.

During the Committee of the Whole meeting before the regular meeting, members discussed the \$3.5 million reimbursement to the Cleveland Indians for their repairs to Progressive Field. Several asked pointed questions about the terms of the current lease, which is up in 2023. At the start of the regular meeting, County Executive Armond Budish urged Council to approve the resolution he is introducing at this meeting that would allow county employees to work at the polls on Election Day, Nov. 3, without losing their regular compensation or the \$172 the Board of Elections pays to poll workers. He said Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose supports the legislation.

III. Business Transacted.

All items reported here were among those approved unanimously at today's meeting:

* Permission for county employees to serve as 11/03 poll workers without losing their regular county pay. Anthony Perlatti, director of the county's Board of Elections, said the BOE plans to open 300 polling locations comprising 975 precincts on Election Day. To do that, they need 4,000 poll workers who must be trained by Oct. 15. Covid-19 safety measures will be used at all polling locations. The area bar associations are encouraging attorneys to work at the polls, too, by giving them continuing legal education credits for the work.

* \$3.5 million to the Cleveland Indians for major capital repairs to Progressive Field that have already been completed. Mr. Gallagher said he hopes the county can make some changes to the terms next time, complaining about paying \$660,000 for expansion of the players' parking lot. The funds for this payment comes from a sports facility reserve fund established in 2017 and partially funded by the sin tax (which has not brought in what had been expected, thanks to a drop in cigarette smoking and to Covid-19).

* A \$1.5 million grant agreement with the Cleveland Foundation to provide matching funds for the foundation's Digital Inclusion Fund to support "digital equity" efforts through the end of August 2021. Mr. Brady said he was especially proud of this legislation.

* The routine monthly appropriations and transfers item included several unusual ones:
-- \$12.9 million in advance payments to MetroHealth from employee and employer health insurance premiums (due to the impact of Covid-19);

- \$2.4 million for the second year of the Say Yes to Education program (funds include money from the HHS levy); and
- \$1.4 million to pay the County's Hilton Hotel property taxes; and

* An amendment to the Say Yes to Education program's agreement among the County, the Say Yes program, and the Cleveland Municipal School District. The amendment extends the program one year and adds the Breakthrough charter schools to the agreement. The resolution included the acceptance of \$2 million from CMSD and Breakthrough and a payment of \$3.8 million to College Now Greater Cleveland as fiscal agent for the Say Yes program.

* \$900,000 for two architectural engineering contracts to meet county infrastructure needs. Funding is from the CARES Act (\$200,000) and the general fund (\$700,000).

* \$15 million in a second round of CARES Act funding for Covid-19 Emergency Building Modifications to be performed by eight different construction firms, all of which responded to the county's RFP for the projects. Mr. Miller was anxious to explain that the contracts were not "no-bid," as they had been reported.

* A one-year Economic Recovery Plan instead of the five-year Economic Development Plan called for in the county's charter. The change was made because of the serious economic impact of the pandemic.

- * Two ordinances related to county employees and Covid-19:
- A temporary expansion of the county's requirements for employees working from home; and
 - Hazard Pay for non-bargaining county employees who interact with the public or who face increased exposure to Covid-19 while doing their jobs.

IV. Notes.

Council's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 15.