

## County Council Regular Meeting: July 11, 2019

Observer: Lynda Mayer

*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.**

The meeting was called to order at 5pm by Council President Dan Brady with all members present. It ended by 5:18, one of the shortest meetings this observer has ever observed.

### **II. Antecedents, Announcements & Public Comments.**

The Committee of the Whole began at 2pm to discuss pending legislation to raise the county's "bed tax" and to beef up the office of County Sheriff. A 1% increase of the bed tax would generate from \$4.6-4.7 million, all of which would help pay for direct and indirect costs of upkeep and operation of the new convention center, thereby freeing up general fund monies which could now be spent 60% on sports facilities and 40% on Rock Hall induction ceremonies. Debate centered not so much around the tax itself but around the use of liberated county revenue for those two items when many other needs might be more pressing. Combined bed/sales taxes in the county are currently 13.5% with 3% more tacked on by Cleveland or several other cities. The average overhead in the U.S. is between 14 and 18%, so the proposal is not out of line. After long discussion, the 1% hike proposal was voted out of committee.

The other topic was an alternative proposal which would retain but beef up the appointive office of Sheriff, particularly in the area of jail administration. LWV co-president Audrey Morris praised that plan's education & training requirement, and Will Tarter of the 2013 Charter Review Commission related the reasons why that group rejected the idea of electing the Sheriff. Council members Tuma, Jones & Simon then elaborated on the ways in which their alternative addresses most concerns about an appointed Sheriff's knowhow, independence, and authority. Other Council members wondered who would be able to trigger Council action to remove a sheriff with whom they were displeased? (A: the Executive or any member of Council), or how can Council do oversight if they can't really see what's going on? (A: establish a citizen commission and/or require regular reports to Council). All suggestions were constructive, and Mr. Gallagher concluded with the promise that Council would get this right. Neither measure was voted out of committee today, but both will again be debated by the Committee of the Whole before the next Council meeting on July 23. Whatever emerges will get second reading that day and third reading disposition on August 6, the deadline for Council to submit a question to the Board of Elections for inclusion on the November 6 ballot.

Most announcements and public comment centered around the very successful work of Destination Cleveland for Major League Baseball's All-Star Game events this past weekend. The next big sports happening in Cleveland will be the NFL Draft festivities 20 months hence.

### **III. Business Transacted.**

\* Passed: A resolution adopting the 2020 Annual Alternative Tax Budget

\* Designation of Dollar Bank (Federal Savings Bank) as an eligible depository for up to a limit of \$200 million of the county's active and interim funds – Final action scheduled on 7/23.

\* Among measures introduced and referred to committee were the following:

-- A purchase and sale agreement with MetroHealth for the transfer of the county's W. 25<sup>th</sup> & Sackett property in Cleveland for redevelopment as low-income housing

-- \$1.5 million in additional funds and a time extension, to augment the staff for the Enterprise Resource Planning Project

-- An ordinance establishing the Cuyahoga County Energy Participation Program.

#### **IV. Notes.**

Neither Charter Amendment proposal regarding the Sheriff was on today's agenda, nor was the hike in the hotel bed tax. Both will return for 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on July 23 (after yet another Committee of the Whole debate) and get final disposition on August 6<sup>th</sup>, the last regular Council meeting of the summer.