

County Council Regular (Remote) Meeting, May 12, 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 held by teleconference, with no opportunity for comment by the public. Council president Dan Brady called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.; it ended at 2:30 p.m. All members were present, although Mr. Jones was late, arriving at 2:20 p.m.

II. Antecedents, Announcements and Public Comment.

Members of the public can email comments to Jeanne Schmotzer, council clerk, before the meeting and she will enter them into the record. County Executive Armond Budish said that county officials are discussing when the county building can safely be reopened to the public. Whenever that is, there will be rules for both the public and employees. For example, masks will be required, hand-washing will be promoted, and only two people at a time will be allowed on elevators; many employees will be encouraged to continue to work at home.

III. Business Transacted

* An amendment to the plastic bag ordinance was introduced, delaying its enforcement until Jan. 1, 2021. The delay, referred to a “grace period” in the legislation, was introduced because of the coronavirus; grocery stores are not allowing customers to bring their own bags into stores while the virus is spreading. The amendment was referred to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

The following resolutions and one ordinance were passed under suspension of the rules:

* Amendments of the 2020-21 biennial operating budget, a routine bimonthly resolution. Mr. Miller said he wanted to note three items in the legislation.

-- a \$7.9 million transfer from the general fund to the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) fund, the fund paying for the IT program designed to integrate offices across the county. Mr. Miller wanted council members to know that this transfer is not new; it was approved at an earlier council meeting this year.

-- a \$2.5 million appropriation increase from the Casino Tax Revenue/Community Development Fund to support the county housing program.

-- a \$50 million increase to purchase critical items necessary to fight the coronavirus pandemic (funding under the county’s current state of emergency now totals \$56 million).

* \$4.8 million in additional funds to nine providers of community-based services to support at-risk children and families through March 31, 2021.

* \$775,000 in additional funds to the Cleveland Department of Public Health for administration and coordination of prenatal and inter-conceptional care (care between pregnancies) to high-risk families in connection with the expansion of the MomsFirst Program for the Invest in Children Program through Dec. 31, 2021.

*Amendment of an ordinance last amended on April 14, to clarify that paid emergency leave for county employees personally dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic will “expire on the earlier of the Emergency End Date or Dec. 19, 2020.” The previous amendment referred only to the Dec. 19 date.

- * Various items were introduced and referred to committees, including the following :
- Confirmation of the county executive’s appointments of directors of Health and Human Services (David Merriman) and Human Resources (Jesse S. Drucker).
 - a \$526,000 agreement with the OH Auditor’s office for its 2019 annual audit of the county.
 - \$1.4 million for fire and smoke dampers and systems inspections and repairs.
 - \$5.9 million award for replacement of the Memphis Road Bridge in Brooklyn.

IV. Notes.

The meeting ended with council members discussing the times their committees will meet remotely. Mr. Schron asked Mr. Brady and Mr. Budish when council can again meet in person in the county building. Mr. Budish said the building’s opening date has not yet been decided.

The best part of watching council members remotely was seeing Ms. Simon’s pet parakeet (I’m guessing it’s a parakeet) on a perch next to her.