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Health, Human Services & Aging Committee Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

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Summary

- A resolution was approved by the committee amending a contract for purchasing basic family items from specified businesses for Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) families (or potential families).
- A resolution was approved by the committee amending the contract with service providers for “chronically homeless single adults and high-barrier homeless persons.”
- A resolution was approved by the committee amending the contract with Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM) for services provided at the men’s emergency shelter at 2100 Lakeside Avenue. This resolution would allow the expenditure of an additional \$1.575 million through Dec. 31.

Follow-Up Questions

- The resolutions considered in this meeting were all related to extending contracts that had either expired or would expire in August (the month during which there would be no committee meeting). Committee Chair Yvonne Conwell (District 7) said this August recess was well-known, yet these amendments were all considered at the last meeting before recess. Why the delay? Is this a common practice?
- I’m a little unclear about the suspension of second reading. How does that work?
[Editor’s note: The committee approved them with the understanding that they would be up for final passage at the Aug. 1 full council meeting. It will be only the second full council meeting the resolutions are read at, so council is set to suspend the rule requiring legislation be read at three separate council meetings before a final vote is held.]
- I think the resolution about permanent supportive housing involves the expenditure of additional funds (according to the agenda), but this point wasn’t made clear during the meeting. Is that true?

- I'm curious about the lawsuit involving the [youth drop-in center](#) by nearby residents stating that the area wasn't zoned for the center. It seems like the committee had decided not to address this issue until the lawsuit was complete.
- Toward the end of the meeting, the sound dropped out from the microphones of several participants, mostly from Conwell. It was an isolated incident in this meeting, but I was curious if this occurs during other council or committee meetings or if this was an unusual situation.

Notes

Board Members: Yvonne Conwell, chair (District 7), Martin Sweeney, vice chair (District 3), Cheryl Stephens (District 10), Meredith Turner (District 9), Dale Miller (District 2)

Call to order and roll call - The meeting was called to order by Conwell at 1:02 p.m. All members were present.

Public comment - During public comment, [Loh](#) voiced support of the resolutions to be presented to the committee during this meeting but also talked about "other ways to utilize our funding better" so that individuals can truly "thrive" and the county is not just maintaining the "status quo." Loh spoke of a "vicious cycle" where individuals can temporarily obtain housing but are likely to fall back into homelessness.

Approval of meeting minutes - The committee unanimously approved the [meeting minutes from the July 12 meeting](#).

Matters referred to committee - The committee considered three resolutions during the meeting, which are discussed below.

- The first resolution was to extend a contract with different businesses (e.g., Dave's Supermarket, A-Z Furniture Co., etc.) from 8/31/23 to 8/31/24. This contract enables the provision of basic needs for families involved with the [Department of Child and Family Services](#) (DCFS) or who are at risk of DCFS involvement.

This resolution was needed because this will be the last meeting of the committee before the contract is scheduled to expire, an official said. Committee Chair Yvonne Conwell (District 7) asked if all payments to providers from the county had been on time and was told by Marcos Cortes of DCFS that he believed this was true (but that he would make sure). The committee unanimously approved the resolution.

- The second resolution was to extend a contract until 6/30/2024 with service providers of permanent supportive housing for “chronically homeless single adults and high-barrier homeless persons.” This contract will authorize the expenditure of funds not to exceed \$2 million. Melissa Sirak, director of the county’s [Office of Homeless Services](#), introduced representatives from several provider agencies to the committee (e.g. Front Steps, EDEN, YWCA, etc.).

In response to a question from Conwell about prompt payment of invoices, Sirak stated that the office was “working through a transition” with the retirement of a fiscal manager but said she believed that all payments were current. Council Member Dale Miller (District 2) asked how much residents of permanent supportive housing pay for that housing. Elaine Gimmel, executive director of EDEN, said that around 80% of her residents have some form of income and that those individuals pay 30% of income toward housing (she also stated that around 5-10% of residents were employed). Gimmel also said that new housing for young adults (both families and single individuals) and seniors (including specifically for veterans) will be opening in the foreseeable future.

The committee unanimously approved the resolution.

- The third resolution was an amendment to extend the contract with [Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry](#) (LMM) for operation of the men’s emergency shelter at 2100 Lakeside Avenue from 8/19/2023 to 12/31/2023. This resolution would authorize the additional expenditure of funds not to exceed \$1.575 million. A couple of representatives from LMM (including Maria Foschia, president and CEO of LMM, addressed the committee about this amendment. Director Sirak described the work LMM does through the 2100 Lakeside shelter and the increased costs and demand for services LMM has experienced the past several years.

In response to a question from Conwell, Sirak said payment of invoices was up to date. In response to questions from Miller, Sirak affirmed that the requested \$1.575 million was an additional amount not in the budget and said that increasing costs were largely due to inflation and the need to retain staff. She said the increase in families served was due to the larger crisis in affordable housing and that recent data regarding recipients of LMM services showed an increase of recipients from out of state and from counties outside of Cuyahoga.

Miller asked about the status of a lawsuit seeking to block the construction of a

youth drop-in center in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. Foschia said the lawsuit is still pending. Separately, Sirak informed the committee that a new building serving clients at 2020 Lakeside Ave. is scheduled to open in October. The committee unanimously approved the resolution and a suspension of the required second reading of the resolution (so that the extension could go into effect before the end of August). This matter will now be considered by the full council.

Miscellaneous business – Conwell informed the committee about a recent planning meeting she attended for MetroHealth's first free [Multicultural Fair and Women's Expo](#), which is scheduled for Saturday, September 30. Conwell asked committee members for ideas to increase the county's participation in the expo, and she mentioned the possibility of giving wellness points to county employees who attended.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

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