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Committee of the Whole [AFTERNOON SESSION]

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

Date: Aug. 16, 2023

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Summary

- City staff and council members disagreed about the need to raise parking rates.
- There were lengthy discussions about many ordinances.
- Some projects under development are expected to bring income into the city.

Follow-Up Questions

- Are the proposed parking rates workable? Will families be able to visit downtown?
- Is council monitoring lead abatement in Cleveland?
- Is council concerned about affordable housing in Cleveland?

Notes

The [afternoon session](#) of the Cleveland City Council Committee of the Whole began at 1:56 p.m. and ended at 8:41 p.m. Thirty-three of 34 emergency ordinances on the [agenda](#) were approved by the committee.

Council President Blaine Griffin's method of conducting the meeting was to allow ample discussion regarding each ordinance prior to a vote. This resulted in a lengthy but informative session. There were several heated and lengthy discussions on many of the ordinances presented.

Cleveland's historic League Park staff were present. The committee approved [legislation](#) allowing the city to lease space adjacent to the park to the Baseball Heritage Museum. Questions were raised concerning how staff were reaching out to the African-American community to allow full participation with the museum and baseball field. Staff responded with plans to host a baseball game for historically Black colleges and universities at the park on a weekend. Additional suggestions were encouraged.

The safety director requested, through six ordinances, new equipment for the fire division, as the current gear is worn and ineffective. The safety director explained in

detail the need, and all six ordinances were passed.

A [presentation](#) by Cleveland's Sarah O'Keeffe and James DeRosa about Volta Charging LLC regarding [publicly accessible electric vehicle charging stations](#) brought positive discussion about outcomes and locations. Ward 1 already has two. Stations will be free for partial electric cars and cost a small fee for total electric cars. The majority of council members were amenable to having stations in their wards. The ordinance authorizing continued development passed.

There was a discussion on the [renovation](#) of Erieview Tower and the Galleria. Currently it is 60% vacant, according to project rep Jon Pinney. James Kassouf, the developer, has contracted with Marriott International to bring its brand of [W Hotels](#) and [W Residences](#) to the building. The Kassouf family is committed to this, Pinney said. Huntington Bank will finance the project. Cleveland Construction Company will be the construction manager.

The Galleria will include entertainment and retail. There will be about \$40 million in state and federal incentives and a 10-year 75% tax abatement from the city. Council members said they would like more in-depth information regarding the need for hotel beds and a third party analysis of the project design. They asked if this will stabilize the northeast business district. More info will be brought to council, though the committee approved the legislation.

But the hot potato was the [ordinance](#) relating to parking rates, meters and municipal parking facilities. Staff from Finance and Public Works presented plans on increased parking fees, methods of payment and a three-tier pricing strategy to be able to set rates between \$1 and \$8 per hour at meters and increase them in some parking lots and garages, including up to \$70 at the North Coast Municipal Parking Lot (Muni Lot) during special events.

The council listened to the proposal and the reasons for it. A study has been completed on Cleveland's parking rates vs. those in comparable cities, and Cleveland falls far behind, officials said.

After pushing back and forth with the presenters, council focused on neighborhoods such as Kamm's Corners, Gordon Square, Shaker Square, and East 105th Street. It was discussed that the neighborhoods outside of downtown Cleveland should be exempt from the rate changes for now. The bottom line for staff is that the current rates charged don't generate enough revenue to keep the facilities up to date. **The ordinance was held.**

Overall it was a long session but council members seemed to remain engaged until the

end.

The discussions appeared honest and open. The willingness of council members to help one another was quite visible. I did note the tendency to sit segregated by race. And the chair seemed very tired at the end.

Council Member Kerry McMormack chaired the meeting when Griffin went to the 3 p.m. press conference with Gov. Mike DeWine.

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