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Council Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Aug. 1, 2023

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Summary

- The meeting was split into eight main parts, which are on [the agenda](#):
 - Public Comment
 - Legislation Introduced by Council
 - Legislation Introduced by Executive
 - Consideration of Resolutions for First Reading and Referral to Committee
 - Committee Reports and Consideration of Resolutions for Second Reading Adoption under Suspension of Rules
 - Consideration of Resolutions for Third Reading Adoption
 - Consideration of an Ordinance for First Reading and Referral to Committee
 - Committee Reports and Consideration of Ordinances for Second Reading Adoption under Suspension Rules.
- Several stakeholders, including current and past mayors, Garfield Heights council members, and community members expressed favorable or unfavorable views towards the county's plan to build a new jail in Garfield Heights.
- Council voted against a plan to purchase land in Garfield Heights for that purpose.
- Several County Council members expressed that constituents of Cuyahoga County [should vote on extending an additional sales tax to fund new jail construction instead of the council members](#).

Follow-Up Questions

- If the council votes to change the contract for food at their correctional facilities, who would the contract go to?
- How can council turn the responsibility of voting for the new jail in Garfield Heights over to taxpayers?

Notes

The Scene

The meeting began at the Cuyahoga County Administrative Offices in the C. Ellen Connally Council Chambers shortly after 5:10 p.m. Council members sat around a long table facing the public. Council members present were:

- Pernel Jones, Council President (District 8)
- Patrick Kelly (District 1)
- Dale Miller (District 2)
- Martin Sweeney (District 3)
- Scott Tuma (District 4)
- Michael Gallagher (District 5)
- Jack Schron (District 6)
- Yvonne Conwell (District 7)
- Meredith Turner (District 9)
- Cheryl Stephens, Council Vice-President (District 10)
- Sunny Simon (District 11)

Public Comment

There were many individuals present who voiced concerns in favor and in opposition of building a new jail in Garfield Heights. Jason Seither, council member of Ward 3 (Garfield Heights), Mayor Matt Burke (Garfield Heights), and former Mayor Thomas Longo (Garfield Heights) voiced opinions in favor of the jail.

Attorney Ross DiBello, who ran for mayor of Cleveland in 2021, asked the county to take a stand and refuse to build a jail in Garfield Heights, saying, “law enforcement and incarceration are not crime prevention,” and “We need you to fight off the wealthiest influences on this issue,” and “Other counties in Ohio have similar influences and yet, they have less county courts than us.”

Garfield Heights resident Laura Peterre said she was against planning a jail in Garfield Heights.

Garfield Heights resident Mark Smith said, “I’ve been there since 1994...primarily for three reasons: location, location, location. You can pretty much be anywhere in the area...in less than about 10 minutes. Freeway access is right there. That is a primary reason I believe that it should be considered....[for] the building of the jail.”

Resident [Loh](#) said, “Why we cannot use [[American Rescue Plan Act funding](#)] for affordable housing or demolish the shelter buildings to rebuild. No community can go prosperous just because they built a jail there. The best land use...for such a rare

opportunity, we should think about mixed used, multifamily projects, housing, schools, local business. Any of those things you can put to actually establish a sustainable economy growth for Garfield Heights.”

Cuyahoga County residents Matthew Ahn, Kareem Henton, and John Eckerly voiced their opposition -- [as some others did at a previous meeting](#) -- to building the jail in Garfield Heights due to overspending, concern for people who are incarcerated and have mental health issues, and systemic solutions respectively.

Garfield Heights Council Member Clifford Kelley voiced his support for the jail, saying, “I have not heard one negative comment about the jail coming to Garfield.”

State Representative Darnell Brewer (District 18) said, “If there’s going to build a campus on your facility in Garfield, make sure they have the type of resources that make that building go out of business in 20 years. We need to find a way to bring everyone to the table. I’m asking you all to make that hard decision to support the administration.”

Cleveland resident Chris Martin said, “If y’all extend this sales tax, it becomes that much harder to find local funding for transit. Do we value capital expenditures, do we value operating expenses? With this jail, we’re saying we value guns over butter, we value capital projects over operating expenses. Shiny new buildings don’t reimagine anything. Shiny new buildings don’t provide justice.”

Council President Jones asked if there was a message from Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne. Brendan Doyle, interim chief of administration staff, reiterated the urgency of building the jail, and said that it is unfair for taxpayers to fund a deteriorating facility (referring to the current county jail in downtown Cleveland).

Council then spent the remainder of the meeting voting on several pieces of legislation. The council voted to adopt 30-plus resolutions and deny one. It denied two ordinances.

Some resolutions adopted

- R2023-0186: A Resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$225,000, to Baldwin Wallace University for year two of the [Northeast Ohio Flight Information Exchange \(NEOFIX\) Program](#) from the District 2 ARPA Community Grant Fund and the Department of Development’s General Fund budget; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

- 2023-0189: A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$30,000, to the Dunnican Foundation for the [Comics at the Corner Literacy Lounge](#) from the District 8, 9, 10 & 11 ARPA Community Grant Funds; and declaring the necessity that this Resolution become immediately effective.
- R2023-0216: A resolution authorizing an amendment to Contract No. 402 with [Trinity Services Group, Inc. for jail food services](#) for the Cuyahoga County Jail System for the period 6/15/2020 – 6/14/2023 to extend the time period to 9/30/2023 and for additional funds in the amount of \$936,886, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$9,863,545; authorizing the county executive to execute the amendment and all other documents consistent with this resolution; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.
- **The council moved to adopt the above resolution with seven affirmative votes and four opposing votes. For this vote, sometimes the mic went out and it was difficult to hear.**
- R2023-0180: A resolution confirming the county executive's appointment of Kelly Lynn Woodard, upon her taking the oath of office, as director of communications, and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

The council moved to adopt and held an official swearing in ceremony of Kelly Lynn Woodard.

The council moved to refer the following resolutions to committees:

- R2023-0227: A resolution amending [Resolution No. R2020-0100](#) dated 6/23/2020, which declared public convenience and welfare for the resurfacing of various roads, avenues and streets located in various municipalities in connection with the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program, by changing the termini for Forbes Road from First Place to Richmond Road to Fair Oaks Road to Richmond Road in the Cities of Bedford, Bedford Heights and Village of Oakwood and to change the total estimated project cost from \$930,000.00 to \$2,130,000; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

The council moved to refer the resolution to the [Public Works, Procurement & Contracting Committee](#).

- R2023-0228: A resolution authorizing an amendment to Contract No. 1383 (fka Contract No. CE1700088-01) with Level 3 Communications, LLC for lease of

parking lot spaces located at 4000 Euclid Ave., Cleveland for use by the Department of Health and Human Services for the period 4/1/2017 – 6/30/2023, to extend the time period to 6/30/2028, to change the terms effective 7/1/2023 and for additional funds in the amount not-to-exceed \$157,500; authorizing the County Executive to execute the amendment and all other documents consistent with this Resolution; and declaring the necessity that this Resolution become immediately effective.

The council moved to refer the resolution to the [Public Works, Procurement & Contracting Committee](#).

- O2023-0014: An Ordinance providing for the adoption of a new Section 3.04 of the Cuyahoga County Employee Handbook; and declaring the necessity that this Ordinance become immediately effective.

The ordinance was referred to the [Human Resources, Appointments & Equity Committee](#).

- R2023-0204: A Resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$25,000, to the Neighborhood Pets Outreach & 3 Resource Center for Pet Care Support for Homebound Seniors from the District 8 ARPA Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this Resolution become immediately effective.

The council moved this to the Sept. 12 Council meeting.

Council voted against the following resolution and ordinances:

- [R2023-0182](#): A Resolution authorizing a Real Estate Purchase Agreement with CRAIG REALTY GROUP - CLEVELAND, LLC, or its designee, in an amount not-to-exceed \$38,703,000.00 for the purchase of certain parcels of real property in Garfield 11 Heights, Ohio with access to Granger Road totaling approximately 72.1 acres now known as permanent parcel numbers 542-14-004, 542-15-002, and 542-22-022, and a portion of permanent parcel number 542-14-002; authorizing the County Executive to take all necessary actions and to execute the Purchase Agreement and any and all other agreements and documents consistent with this Resolution; and declaring the necessity that this Resolution become immediately effective.

The council had questions about the substitutions to the current resolution, particularly if the county still had the right to the earnest refundable deposit as previously written. The county Director of Law answered these questions, but the council still seemed confused. They did not have a quorum and did not adopt the substitution.

O2023-0012: An Ordinance amending and codifying Board of County Commissioners Resolution No. 2007-073101 dated July 26, 2007, and enacting new Chapter 727, Section 727.01 20 of the Cuyahoga County Code to change the period of time during which the County sales tax shall be levied at the aggregate rate of one and one-fourth percent; and declaring the necessity that this Ordinance become immediately effective.

The council voted against this, which would extend the additional .25% sales tax, set to expire in 2027, for 40 years. Several council members voiced concern that taxpayers should be the ones to vote on the jail.

- O2023-0013: An Ordinance amending and codifying Board of County Commissioners Resolution No. 2007-073102 dated July 26, 2007 and enacting new Chapter 727, Section 727.02 of the Cuyahoga County Code to change the period of time during which the County use tax shall be levied at the aggregate rate of one and one-fourth percent; and declaring the necessity that this Ordinance become immediately effective.

The council voted against this ordinance.

End of the meeting

Council decided that the next Human Resources and Equity report would be scheduled for Sept. 12. The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m.

The next Cuyahoga County Council meeting is set for Sept. 12 at 5 p.m. in the C. Ellen Connally Council Chambers at the Cuyahoga County Administrative Building.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at clDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.