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Community Development Committee Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: September 19, 2023

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Summary

- The committee approved disbursement of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to three community organizations. This will now go before the full council.
- The committee approved disbursement of \$6.3 million of federal funds to several organizations for the construction or rehabilitation of affordable housing units in Cleveland, Lakewood and Cleveland Heights. This will now go before the full council.
- The council authorized disbursement of \$10 million to Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP) for affordable senior housing and \$10 million to Emerald Development and Economic Network (EDEN) for affordable housing for unhoused people. This appears to be a second reading, with the required full council reading having been suspended.

Follow-Up Questions

- This felt like a pretty pro forma meeting—like all of the actual decisions were made beforehand. Why do grant applications for \$10,000 to \$20,000 have detailed PowerPoint presentations, while \$10 million disbursements are approved with little to no comment?
- I'd like to know more about Council Member Michael Gallagher's remarks about political leaders in the county not spending "political juice" around funding for senior citizens. I found [this 2021 Center for Community Solutions report](#) which states that: 1) Cuyahoga County has a higher percentage of individuals 60+ years old compared with the state of Ohio and the United States overall, 2) as of 2018, senior funding per capita in Cuyahoga County (\$76 per senior) is significantly lower than both Hamilton County (\$120) and Franklin County (\$178), and 3) as of 2018 Cleveland has the second-highest senior poverty rate, behind only Miami.
- Regarding the \$10 million ESOP/EDEN resolution, is it now approved since the full council reading was suspended?

Notes

Board members: Cheryl Stephens, chair (District 10); Pernell Jones Jr., vice chair (District 8); Sunny Simon (District 11); Michael Gallagher (District 5); Patrick Kelly (District 1)

Committee meeting notes:

Call to order and roll call - The meeting was called to order by Stephens shortly after 9 a.m. All members were present.

Public comment - There was no public comment during this meeting.

Approval of meeting minutes - The committee unanimously approved the meeting minutes from the July 10 meeting.

Matters referred to committee - The committee considered the resolutions discussed below:

- The first resolution was to award up to \$20,000 to the Metro West Community Development Corp. for the Future Ink Graphics Creative Development Project. These funds would be distributed from the District 3 American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) Community Grant Fund. Stephanie Kluk, owner/founder of Future Ink Graphics, gave a presentation to the committee about her organization overall and the grant-funded project specifically. Future Ink Graphics works with artists and graphic designers in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood of Cleveland. This grant (which is in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities) would hire professionals to work individually with three to four artists with disabilities, along with an additional three to four individuals with the goal of helping artists grow as entrepreneurs. The council unanimously approved the first reading of the resolution, which will now go before the full council.
- The second resolution was to award up to \$10,000 to Ohio Voice, the fiscal sponsor for Fifth Christian Church Disciples of Christ, for refrigerator and other kitchen repairs. These funds would be distributed from the District 9 American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) Community Grant Fund. Pastor Evan Regis Bunch spoke to the committee about the church's literacy and social action program, which served around 30 children over a six-week period this summer. This year's theme

was gun violence, with participating children traveling to Columbus to meet with state legislators on the topic. Bunch clarified that the church kitchen needs more than \$10,000 in repairs and that they have submitted other grant applications to cover these additional costs. The council unanimously approved the first reading of the resolution, which will now go before the full council.

- The third resolution was to award up to \$20,000 to the Delta Alpha Lambda Foundation for repair work to their food pantry distribution site on East 116th Street in Cleveland. These funds would be distributed from the District 9 American Rescue Plan Act (APRA) Community Grant Fund. Lateef Saffore, chair of the foundation, gave a presentation specifying the necessary repair work (e.g., improvement to the rear entry of the building to allow for easier deliveries, purchasing a forklift dolly, etc.). The council unanimously approved the first reading of the resolution, which will now go before the full council.
- After these three resolutions, the committee heard from Sarah Parks Jackson, [Director of the Cuyahoga County Department of Housing and Community Development](#). Jackson said that the 2022-23 Community Development Block Grant should be amended by removing a \$150,000 award to the village of Highland Hills for a Comprehensive Plan Update. Jackson said that there would not be enough time to complete the update and that the funds would be requested through a different process. The council unanimously approved this amendment of the resolution, which will now go before the full council.
- The fourth resolution was from Jackson authorizing the disbursement of \$6.3 million of federal HOME and emergency rental assistance loans to several organizations (Benjamin Rose, EDEN, etc.) for affordable housing units in Cleveland, Lakewood and Cleveland Heights. Jackson introduced several individuals from these organizations who were in the audience, but since she was speaking away from the microphone, the names of these individuals weren't captured.

Council Member Gallagher said that "Cuyahoga County has completely fallen down in serving the seniors of Cuyahoga County." Gallagher referred to a [Brett Larkin column](#) in yesterday's *Plain Dealer* detailing the ways that "Cuyahoga County has slipped" compared with Columbus. (While the column compared Cleveland negatively with Columbus in areas such as population and economic development, it does not mention senior issues specifically.) He said that Cuyahoga County doesn't have resources for senior citizens because it is "always

stopped at the top, that someone doesn't want to spend any political juice on going out and asking for money." Gallagher said that seniors "in the latter years of their lives" shouldn't have to worry about anything, but "in Cuyahoga County they worry about everything." Chair Stephens acknowledged and agreed with Gallagher's remarks.

Council Member Simon asked Jackson about potential loan defaults if the housing was no longer considered affordable. Jackson said that almost all projects had other partners with their own affordable housing and that the county had mechanisms to recoup loaned funds in case of default. The council unanimously approved the first reading resolution, which will now go before the full council in an expedited manner.

- The final two resolutions were to authorize contracts for \$10 million to Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP) for housing for unhoused individuals, and for \$10 million to EDEN for senior housing. The council unanimously approved this second reading of these resolutions, with the full council reading having been suspended.

Miscellaneous business: Jackson said she learned about a month ago about a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant with an award amount ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million. This grant encompasses multiple areas related to affordable housing, including a focus on low- and moderate-income individuals, working to change zoning laws to promote affordable housing construction, and working to increase homeownership. Multiple municipalities in the county will be working together to submit grant applications.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned shortly before 11 a.m.

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