

# Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

## Council Meeting

Documenter name: Marian Bryant

Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Sept. 26, 2023

[See more about this meeting at Documenters.org](#)

---

## Summary

- Council approved, in a vote of 8-3, the purchase of land in Garfield Heights for a new county jail site.
- Former Slavic Village development official is set to be named the county's Director of Regional Collaboration.

## Follow-Up Questions

- Why was a proposed jail site at Kirby and Eddy Road in Cleveland not vetted with the public?
- Where will the county get the money for this jail project? Will the council need to go to the voters for it? How are they going to sell this project to the voters?

## Notes

This meeting was called to order at 5:07 p.m. by Council President Pernell Jones Jr. A call of the roll noted all [11 members](#) present. Find the agenda [here](#).

Public comment:

Nine people presented. Most concerns centered on issues of health and welfare, community safety and protection. Some commenters said more county dollars need to be spent in this area.

Other commenters focused specifically on the county jail project;

Kareem Henton, with the [Cuyahoga County Jail Coalition](#), spoke at both the Committee of the Whole meeting and the regular council meeting. He discussed issues regarding a new jail site, including transportation concerns for inmates and families. He proposed

refurbishing the current jail.

Stephanie Thomas shared her experience of being incarcerated at the jail. She cited poor food and no medical care.

Another commenter suggested a systemic approach to a justice system that requires more than a building.

Thomas Longo, former mayor of Garfield Heights, applauded the county's plan to purchase 72 acres in Garfield Heights. He encouraged the council not to nickel and dime the project but to expand beyond boundaries and look at the big picture.

County Executive Chris Ronayne spoke about three items:

(1) A press conference at MetroHealth announcing the creation of the [Women's Health Advisory Council](#). Council Members Yvonne Conwell, Meredith Turner, Cheryl Stephens and others were in attendance and recognized for their work.

(2) A climate leadership conference will be held in Cleveland May 21-23 with about 400 people attending.

(3) The [Jesse Owens Olympic Plaza](#) opened today in Rockefeller Park alongside the Harrison Dillard Trail. Both men excelled on the world stage in track and field and supported each other's successes.

Ronayne wants to appoint Christopher Alvarado as director of the Department of Regional Collaboration. Alvarado outlined his extensive background in development and collaboration, citing his nine years as executive director of Slavic Village Development Corp. In collaboration with other groups, the development corporation was able to restore 300 homes and decrease vacancies by 5%, he said. He also noted a collaboration with Maple Heights. *[Editor's note: Council will consider approving this appointment at its Oct. 10 meeting. Alvarado's remarks came in the [Committee of the Whole meeting](#) that preceded this one].*

The most fraught item on the agenda was the purchase of the Garfield Heights property for the purpose of building a new jail and other buildings and services. There was a heated discussion initiated by Council Member Sunny Simon regarding [a second site](#) at Kirby and Eddy roads in Cleveland. She was concerned that this site was not being publicly vetted.

Simon said that a police transport of a detainee to the Garfield Heights site would require two officers and would thus take more manpower out of service within a community.

Council Member Michael Gallagher reminded the body that they have been debating the issue of jail for five years. Finally, a vote was called by the council president and the measure passed 8-3. *[Editor's note: Conwell, Simon, and Stephens voted no].*

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

I attended both the Committee of the Whole and the council meeting in person. Having presented to this present council on two occasions, I recognized that there are a lot of dynamics occurring among those present that affect council members. At this meeting, I noted an unusual number of businessmen in gray suits lining the back wall and the south side of the room. Did they represent special interest groups?

---

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