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Council Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Oct. 10, 2023

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Summary

- A majority of public comment centered around the recent approval of purchasing land for a new county jail in Garfield Heights. Residents who commented seem to understand that there are physical issues with the existing jail but that a new building will not help alleviate the cycle of mass incarceration. Many commenters called for funding to instead be spent on social programs.
- Proceedings throughout the meeting went smoothly, with no debate on any resolutions or ordinances introduced. The most common types of resolutions passed were allocations of funds for different local organizations' needs and appointments of people to various county positions.
- The 2024-2025 biennial budget appears to be the most pressing upcoming topic for the County Council. It will be appearing before the Committee of the Whole this week.

Follow-Up Questions

- Is there a reason why a large number of appointments are on the agenda around this time? Does the county have a typical cycle for when appointments begin and end?
- Are there substantial diversion programs being funded in addition to the county jail land purchase?
- What priorities does the County Council have in regard to the upcoming biennial budget? Are there budgetary needs that differ from what has previously been prioritized?

Notes

Meeting called to order at 5:04 p.m. The meeting's agenda can be found [here](#).

Roll called; quorum achieved

Present members:

- Pernel Jones Jr., 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)
- Meredith Turner (District 9)
- Sunny Simon (District 11)

Absent members:

- Yvonne Conwell (District 7)
- Cheryl Stephens, vice president (District 10)

Council Member Simon read a statement in support of peace in Israel, which was followed by a moment of silence.

Public comment

The most prevalent topic of public comment was surrounding the proposed construction of a new [county jail](#) in Garfield Heights. Several residents voiced their desire for the money that would be used for the county jail to instead be focused elsewhere.

- LaTonya Goldsby, president and co-founder of Black Lives Matter Cleveland, said, “This proposed jail is a tax on our future and evidence that our county leaders’ bold vision for our county’s future is more mass incarceration.”
- Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson expressed disappointment in the jail purchase, saying that young residents want a change from the “carceral status-quo.”
- Pastor Evan Regis Bunch called for county leadership to imagine different possibilities for addressing justice.
- Two other residents weighed in on the importance of diversion programs, saying they believe a new jail building will not solve the systemic problems in the county.

Three students at Case Western Reserve University, part of the organization Partners In Health Engage, called on the County Council to adopt a resolution expressing support for Medicare for All. They said that the cities of [Cleveland](#), [Lakewood](#), East Cleveland and [Cleveland Heights](#) have passed similar resolutions.

A security officer said he feels pay is too low for county security guards, particularly those

working in government buildings.

Minutes approved.

Announcement from Council President Jones

The Cuyahoga County Council presented a proclamation to commemorate October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in Cuyahoga County.

The council adopted a resolution to commend county bricklayers on their work on the Soldiers & Sailors Monument at Public Square.

Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

Ronayne began by acknowledging the life and service of Judge [Michael Russo](#), who passed away last week, and offered condolences to his family.

He also offered his condolences for the lives lost in the conflict in Israel and mentioned attending a vigil held by the Jewish Community Federation the previous day.

Ronayne then highlighted some of the positives he has seen in the community. He specifically noted the [Forbes 30 Under 30 Summit](#) that took place Oct. 8-11.

Legislation introduced by council (available in [agenda](#))

Legislation moved quickly and without debate throughout the whole session. In total, 17 resolutions and two ordinances were passed. Most agenda items from the council would allocate money to support local organizations and programs.

- Six resolutions were referred to committees for their first reading.
- Six resolutions on their second reading were put on to the agenda for the Oct. 24 council meeting (page 3-4 of agenda).
- Seven resolutions were passed.
 - Six of them directed funds to different local organizations from the [American Rescue Plan Act Community Grant Fund](#).
 - [R2023-0222](#), District 7 Fund
 - [R2023-0230](#), District 3 Fund
 - [R2023-0231](#), District 3 Fund
 - [R2023-0232](#), District 8 Fund
 - [R2023-0233](#), District 9 Fund
 - [R2023-0234](#), District 9 Fund
 - [R2023-0236](#) appointed or reappointed veterans to serve on the Soldiers' & Sailors' Monument Commission Board of Trustees.

- One ordinance was passed, which would update the county code to be consistent with the planning regions used by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission.

Legislation introduced by the county executive

Similar to the legislation introduced by the council, all of Ronayne's legislation was either passed, assigned to committee, or put onto the Oct. 24 meeting agenda without debate.

Several of the resolutions introduced by Ronayne were appointments.

- Appointments passed:
 - Christopher Alvarado as director of the Department of Regional Collaboration (sworn in during the meeting)
 - Stephen Love to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Board of Trustees
- Appointments added to the Oct. 24 agenda
 - Rebekah Dorman to serve on the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County
 - Reappointment of Valerie Katz to serve on the Cuyahoga County Natural Resources Assistance Council
 - Adrian Maldonado to serve on the City of Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board
 - Michael Schoop to serve on the City of Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board
 - Airica Steed to serve on the City of Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board
 - William Seelbach to serve on the City of Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board
 - Brad Cromes to be County Treasurer

Five resolutions were adopted under a suspension of the rules. A suspension allows for the resolutions to be adopted earlier in the process instead of requiring three readings, as standard procedure dictates.

In total, 10 of Ronayne's resolutions were moved to committees, nine were put on the Oct. 24 agenda, and 11 were passed without debate (pages 7-21 of the agenda). One ordinance to update the Cuyahoga County Employee Handbook was also passed.

Biennial budget on the horizon

Resolution [R2023-0285](#) is being sent to the [Committee of the Whole](#) this week, which would pass the County Executive's 2024-2025 biennial budget.

The overview presentation is taking place Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 1 to 4 p.m. The first departmental hearing is Tuesday, Oct. 17, from 1 to 5 p.m.

Council Member Miller encouraged council members to attend all presentations and hearings on the budget, saying that “we have a tight budget and will have to make some difficult decisions.” The biennial budget will likely be a source of significant debate at upcoming meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

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