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## Utilities Committee

Documenter name: Tina Scott

Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

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## Summary

- The Department of Public Utilities told the committee it seeks to provide quality and efficient service at fair and affordable rates.
- The department's presentations illustrated numerous goals such as reliable and quality service, inclusion, and Cleveland Public Power's Apprentice Program, which promoted jobs and job growth.
- The committee and presenters discussed how to make Cleveland Public Power (CPP) and its programs successful in every capacity possible (e.g. safety, equality, inclusion, best practices, accountability, etc.)

## Follow-Up Questions

- Wouldn't it be beneficial for Cleveland to have a resident from the under-represented, under-served areas in each ward attend these meetings to share what they feel is wrong and what they feel would help their residential areas?
- Wouldn't it be beneficial for Cleveland to have a resident from the thriving areas of each ward attend these meetings to share what they feel is going right and what they feel would help Cleveland as a whole, including the under-represented, under-served areas?

## Notes

Attendance:

Brian Kazy, committee chair, council member

Council Members: Michael Polensek, Kris Harsh, Deborah Gray

Utilities: Martin Keane, director; Danielle Graham, executive commissioner; Ammon

Danielson, CPP commissioner; Catherine Troy, department chief financial officer (CFO);

Bernie Jackson, deputy commissioner.

Kazy opened the meeting. Keane and the other department officials began with a [presentation about Cleveland Public Power](#).

There are three parts to an electric bill, according to the presentation: Electricity charge, kilowatt-hour tax, and energy adjustment charge. Danielson said electricity charges are fixed rates.

He shared highlights on CPP's Intern to Apprentice Program promoting jobs and job growth. He also shared that this year [Ta'Jahnae Buchanan](#) became the first woman -- and first African American woman -- to graduate from the lineworker apprentice program.

Danielson said the department's Meter Service Center employs 23 people.

In 2024, senior linemen will be making more than \$40/hr, Danielson said. Some people in leadership roles will make a little more than that. Kazy said that if an 18-year-old attends the apprenticeship for four years and then graduates and makes \$48 an hour, the end result will be financial stability.

Polensek asked about staffing and if the department is at what it was budgeted for. Keane said there are 217 employees and the budgeted number of employees is 305. Polensek asked about the vacancies. Keane said lineworkers are included in the vacancies.

Polensek asked if the apprentice program is inclusive, providing competitive wages for its employees. Keane responded yes and [explained efforts to attract workers](#) by partnering with Cleveland schools. Polensek said \$40 per hour is a good rate and the jobs provide good benefits as well.

Polensek said CPP needs to ensure quality delivery of services with quality of life as one of many essential factors.

Harsh asked how many people are in the apprentice program. Jackson said there are about 36, adding that the department typically hires 10 per year. Keane said that is the goal and they are hitting it, but they're struggling to move participants through the full development program.

Harsh asked if CPP is having a hard time hiring enough contractors to cut down trees around power lines. Danielson said they work efficiently and, to the best of their ability,

have filled those positions.

Gray asked Keane for information on how the apprentice program works for the older residents who sought jobs at a community meeting in the summer. Keane thanked her for the great question and said he would need to follow up with department reps who attended the meeting to give Gray a thorough response.

### **The Division of Fiscal Control**

Officials provided a [presentation](#) that illustrated highlights such as the division's demographics. The division processes 8 million payments annually for Cleveland Water, Water Pollution Control, CPP and other entities. In 2022, the division processed about \$950 million in payments, according to the presentation.

Polensek asked where the payments/checks go after residents send them in. A group opens the checks and digitally deposits them with Huntington Bank, Troy said.

Polensek quoted the late Council Member Fannie Lewis that he "wasn't gonna fatten frogs for snakes." He said we should not be financially benefiting any entity, including banks, that are not benefiting Cleveland's underserved and underrepresented neighborhoods. *[Editor's note: Troy said she did not know details about Huntington's lending practices. Officials said it is a question for the Division of Treasury].*

Kazy and Polensek asked the presenting team to explain the service disconnection notice and process. Kazy asked for clarity if water service could be cut off if a sewer bill is delinquent. Keane said yes, because of an agreement the city has for collecting sewer bills on behalf of the sewer district. He said that usually if someone is behind on sewer, they're behind on water. Kazy said that is not a good look.

Gray shared information on a [utilities resource assistance fair](#) at John Hay High School on Nov. 4 from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

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