

# Documenters

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## City Council

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

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## Summary

- Council performed regular business through the reading of proposed ordinances.
- The majority of public commenters were in support of a Gaza ceasefire resolution to be passed by the City of Cleveland.
- Multiple people said they feel that their rights, or the rights of others, have been violated by the city (see notes on comments from residents Tanmay Shah and Chris Martin), and entities holding power in the city (Dominique Brooks, Katrina Robinson).

## Follow-Up Questions

- Regarding [Emergency Ordinance 195-2024](#), I see that the Department of Public Health has provided health services for payment in the past. Are addiction services a new addition or is this a continuation of authorization? How many direct healthcare services does the Department of Public Health provide?
- Is there a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule disallowing children of different sexes from sharing a room? I see references to this rule in many places online, but the [HUD Tenant Selection guidelines](#) for Public Housing Agencies reads that “persons of the opposite sex (other than spouses) and unrelated adults would not be *required* to share a bedroom.” Does this mean they are prohibited from sharing a bedroom? *[Editor’s note: This is related to a public comment detailed below].*
- Protestors were kicked out of the City Hall rotunda during the meeting. Do they have a right to peacefully assemble there during a City Council meeting?

## Notes

Council President Blaine Griffin opened the meeting giving a “first and only warning” that anyone who disrupts the meeting will be removed from council chambers and not allowed back in.

Griffin then proposed a change to the order of the agenda to allow all legislation to be read first, with public comment moving to the end of the meeting. Council adopted this change for this meeting.

The Second Reading Legislation items were read first. Details on all ordinances can be found on the [agenda](#). Several ordinances were authorizations for spending or leases by Port Control.

Emergency Ordinance [145-2024](#), which council passed, is to authorize a grant agreement with the Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation (better known as the [Cuyahoga Land Bank](#)) to provide “construction gap financing for housing units, subsidize renovation of homes in strategically targeted areas, finance the acquisition of vacant and abandoned properties for purposes of the renovation program, and finance a beautification pilot program in Wards 5, 10 and 14.”

Emergency Ordinance [195-2024](#) reads “Authorizing the Director of Public Health to enter into an agreement or memorandum of understanding to provide essential services for individuals and families with addiction issues, and to services to prevent youth from engaging in drug experimentation; and to accept payments for services provided.”

Around the 13th item, Griffin requested the doors to the chambers be closed as audible chants could be heard from protestors gathering outside the room. (WKYC’s coverage of this week’s protest can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/XY1JYkSz8o?si=qp6EZDY8nwc7mjKp>).

In total, 17 items were included in Second Reading, with a minor revision in the language of [145-2024](#) requested by Council Member Anthony Hairston. All but one received 14 votes for passage from council members. The remaining legislation was for the 2024 Cleveland budget. Council [cannot yet vote on it](#).

The next order of business on the rearranged agenda was First Reading Legislation. In total, 10 emergency ordinances were read (four for referral to committee review, six for passage). Of note, council referred [262-2024](#), which would authorize \$50,000 to be distributed to “reimburse officers for certain expenditures incurred in the performance of their duties supporting community engagement.”

[264-2024](#), which council passed, amended legislation that created the [Transformative Arts Project Funds Program](#).

Ordinances to allocate Ward 3, 4, and 5 casino funds were passed on first reading.

The last item read and passed was [273-2024](#), a [resolution](#) to urge the Federal Railroad Administration to include a stop in Northeast Ohio on the [proposed Detroit-New Orleans Amtrak route](#).

All ordinances passed on first reading received 13 votes in favor, with the final resolution receiving 14 votes.

Special Resolutions honored Ruby Marie Alexander, congratulated Eugene W. Ward Jr., and celebrated the recent renovation of the Brooklyn Campus of the Cleveland Public Library.

These were followed by a moment of silence.

Public comment:

**Rev. Pamela M. Pinkney** said people are showing “disrespect” at recent council meetings because Griffin is a Black man. She said she has contacted the U.S. Department of Justice and FBI about this. “All the Black leadership in this country is under attack,” she said.

“Thank you, reverend,” Griffin responded. “Appreciate it.”

Pinkney closed by saying, “Back off of Council President Griffin and don’t you ever come in here again and disrespect him like that.”

**Dominique Brooks** (Ward 4) spoke about her attempt to get housing through the [Cleveland Housing Network Scholar House Program](#) as a single mother with three children. She said she put a lot of time and effort into the application process only to be told that she could not have her children of different sexes share a room, and only two-bedroom units were available. Brooks said she was told this is a HUD rule, but she cannot find any documentation of it.

**Katrina Robinson** (Ward 11) said she became a homeowner through Cleveland Housing Network in 2001, but after 21 years she was “pushed out” and told her deed was fraudulent and the sheriff who issued it didn’t exist. She said some mortgage companies have worked together to “withhold our rights in Cleveland.” She said she filed a 50-page

document listing all the ways the city failed to protect her, that she was made to look crazy, and became homeless. She said there are fraudulent documents in the city.

**Tanmay Shah** (Ward 16): Began by quoting Martin Luther King Jr., “We do not need allies more devoted to order than to justice.” He thanked Griffin for his “courageous and brave actions of staunchly defending a genocide.” Referring to the protesters gathered outside, Shah said, “As I speak, the citizens of Cleveland are doing your job for you in the rotunda through the People’s Council. And I want the record to reflect this is a peaceful assembly and they were kicked out against their rights to peacefully assemble on public property.”

Shah asked they pass a resolution in support of a ceasefire in Gaza as they have in support of Ukraine in the past. Shah warned members of council (other than Rebecca Maurer, [who said she personally supports a ceasefire](#)) that they are up for re-election next year and their “complicity in genocide” will cause continued population and revenue loss for Cleveland and hurt their chances for reelection. Mentioned the council’s actions surrounding the People’s Budget Issue in 2023 and “[animosity of \[North East Ohio Coalition of the Homeless\]](#)” as contributing factors to growing opposition of current elected council members.

**Nicholas Marshall** (Ward 12): Spoke about his transition from being a “raging racist” to unlearning his biases, gaining critical thinking, and finding Islam, a “religion of radical accountability.” He said, “You are accountable for your sources and education.” He asked council members if they follow Palestinian voices, look at the pictures from Gaza, learn about the history of self-immolation as protest, apartheid Israel, and America’s war crimes. He named explicit and implicit prejudices displayed by council people, such as Polensek calling Palestinian Clevelanders the “Palestinian-Hamas community” in a [widely circulated recording](#). “We are accountable for what we can do...and we are also responsible for the actions we don’t take...you have the resolution in front of you; inaction can be just as consequential as action.”

**Wendy Bilgen** from Cleveland Heights spoke as a Jewish Clevelander asking council to pass a ceasefire resolution. She quoted [Aaron Bushnell](#), a U.S. military member who died after lighting himself on fire in February in protest of what he called a genocide in Palestine. “Many of us like to ask ourselves, ‘What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide?’” Bilgen said, reciting words Bushnell [wrote on Facebook](#). “The answer is, you’re doing it. Right now.” Bilgen said “[Bushnell’s] desperation matches the urgency of the moment.” “Do we agree that the killing of innocent people...is wrong?” Bilgen read

and suggested potential language for a ceasefire resolution and asked council to “use your platform...to pass an emergency ceasefire resolution tonight.”

**Sara Fadlalla** from Richfield said Palestine is a humanitarian, Black liberation, feminist issue. Council claims to support these things, all being suppressed in Gaza right now, she said. She quoted [Nelson Mandela](#): “But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.” Fadlalla compared the number of dead and injured Palestinians, including children, to the capacity of the Guardians Stadium, Wolstein Center, and Browns Stadium to illustrate the scale of mortality in Gaza since October 2023. Fadlalla said Cleveland is 82 square miles and asked council to imagine everyone in 25 square miles being “bombed endlessly” as they are in Rafah, a city in southern Gaza. “Free Palestine, ceasefire now.”

**Riley Petro** from Ward 17 questioned the need for decorum in council, saying, “Why should we should you any respect or decorum when council members lie,” referencing [Council Member Joe Jones](#)’ worries about his car being bombed and Council Member Polensek saying he believed [snacks brought in by protestors](#) were going to be thrown at council members. “You don’t want decorum or respect; you want obedience,” Petro said, calling Griffin a “petty tyrant.” Petro also quoted Bushnell’s last Facebook post.

**Chris Martin** from Ward 3 said the last time he spoke before council was September 2023, [when his microphone was cut off](#) for naming council people who have received funds from the Council Leadership Fund. Martin consequently sued council for this and said the city has [agreed to a settlement](#) to pay \$500 and attorney’s fees. Martin said “money influences speech” and that many millionaires and billionaires give money to the Council Leadership Fund. He said Political Action Committee funds are influencing U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown’s refusal to join congressional calls for a ceasefire in Gaza, and donations to the Council Leadership Fund are similarly influencing Cleveland City Council’s refusal to hear a ceasefire resolution. Martin commended Council Member Maurer for speaking in support of a ceasefire and implored all members to follow her example and “call for a ceasefire now.”

**Rev. E. Regis Bunch** from Shaker Square introduced himself as pastor of a [church in Lee-Harvard](#), a U.S. Army veteran, and a Black man. He said, “Our city’s moral character is called into question in this hour.” He said in past decades, Cleveland City Council [criticized apartheid in South Africa](#). He related the silence of council on the death of more than 30,000 people in Gaza to the struggles of Clevelanders, saying “If you can be silent on this, then you can be silent in Kinsman Union, you can be silent in Lee-Miles, and you can be silent in Lee-Harvard.” He shared a quote about using one’s advantage to help

those who are oppressed, rather than using it to oppress, and asked the council to use their advantage to support a resolution for a ceasefire.

After public comment, the meeting wrapped up with a motion to excuse the absences of Council Members Conwell, Howse-Jones and Santana.

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