

Documenters

POWERED BY CITY BUREAU & SIGNAL CLEVELAND

City Council

Documenter name: Aaron Skubby

Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

Date: April 15, 2024

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

Summary

- The majority of residents during public comment spoke against the plans for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to construct a new building for Marion C. Seltzer School at the current site of Cudell Community Park. The construction was recently approved by a judge despite a legal battle with residents.
- Council Members Kevin Conwell and Richard Starr spoke out at the end of the meeting against the hiring of public safety advisor Phillip McHugh, who previously faced a civil rights lawsuit and is Mayor Justin Bibb's former college roommate.
- Other areas of city politics that came under fire during public comment were council redistricting, investment in Israel bonds, and Bibb's refusal to sign the ceasefire resolution passed by council.

Follow-Up Questions

- Are there any formal checks and balances on hiring of city officials? Does the mayor have final discretion over whether or not someone like Phillip McHugh can stay in their position?
- What happens now that Bibb refused to sign the ceasefire resolution? Can it still pass without his signature? How does the balance of power work? *[Editor's note: Learn more here: <https://signalcleveland.org/mayor-justin-bibb-leaves-cleveland-city-council-gaza-ceasefire-unsigned/>]*
- What do CMSD and the city plan to do with the previous Marion C. Seltzer site? Why are they constructing new buildings during a massive budget deficit?

Notes

All council members were present except Rebecca Maurer, whose absence was excused. View the full list of council members [here](#).

With [quorum](#) achieved, the meeting was called to order at **7:02 p.m.** The agenda can be found [here](#).

Public comment

[Matthew Ahn](#), former candidate for Cuyahoga County prosecutor, spoke on [redistricting Cleveland City Council ward maps](#). Ahn said the current map contains “obvious hallmarks of gerrymandering such as in the shapes of wards 10, 11 and 12.” He urged the council to consider fair mapping practices that preserve communities of interest.

Rocky River resident Basma Hamid spoke against Ohio officials investing in Israel bonds. She said that the bonds are being used by “Zionist occupiers and illegal settlers to steal the land of the Palestinians and ethnically kill children and innocent people in Gaza and Palestine.” She called on state and local officials to divest from bonds and reinvest money in the local community.

Riley Petro spoke against Mayor Justin Bibb’s refusal to sign [Resolution 366-2024](#), which supported a ceasefire in Gaza. “Mr. Bibb doesn’t stand with the people of Cleveland,” Petro said. “He stands with his former employer, Key Bank, with power brokers like Dan Gilbert, and with campaign donors like James Ratner who all support Israel bonds, and the Zionist Jewish Federation, which resides in Beachwood, not Cleveland.”

Five residents spoke against plans to build a new school building for Marion C. Seltzer on the land of Cudell Commons Park. They cited the importance of the park for the community, and several cited the wishes of architect Frank Cudell—they said the land was given to the city on the condition it be a park forever. Recently, [a judge gave the green light for construction to proceed](#).

Cudell resident Nikki Hudson addressed Bibb, asking, “How do you justify destroying the Cudell neighborhood’s only park and its mature, healthy trees while serving as chair of the climate mayors?” ([Climate Mayors](#))

First Reading legislation

15 ordinances were referred to committee review.

Of these, 11 were authorizations for different purchases or partnerships for a variety of city organizations. Notably, two ordinances ([406-2024](#) and [407-2024](#)) would allow the

city to sell some unneeded city-owned land.

Other ordinances included [vacating](#) a portion of a street, authorizing outside funding for fellows and interns, amending another ordinance, and amending General Fund appropriations.

Four ordinances and two [resolutions](#) were approved on first reading.

Among the ordinances were two permit grants for races and approval of a collective bargaining agreement with the International Longshoreman Association ([408-2024](#), [416-2024](#), [417-2024](#)).

One resolution was to fix the summer schedule for council meetings, and the other would withdraw an objection to a liquor license ([409-2024](#), [410-2024](#)).

Second Reading legislation

13 emergency ordinances were passed on second reading.

Once again, 10 of these authorized purchases and partnerships or accepting funds for various city projects.

[Ordinance 227-2024](#) would authorize the directors of Capital Projects, Port Control, and/or Public Works to enter into one or more agreements with Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Metroparks to construct an all-purpose trail on the north side of North Marginal Road, including a maintenance and repair agreement with the Metroparks.

[Ordinance 340-2024](#) authorizes the director of Community Development to enter into one or more agreements with United Way of Greater Cleveland, as the lead partner organization, to implement a program to provide access to legal services for covered individuals in eviction proceedings

One additional ordinance and emergency resolution were passed.

Council members criticize hiring of safety advisor Phillip McHugh

During the miscellaneous portion of the council meeting, Council Members Kevin Conwell (Ward 9) and Richard Starr (Ward 5) criticized the hiring of public safety advisor Phillip McHugh. McHugh was at the center of a civil rights lawsuit in Washington, D.C., and is also Mayor Bibb's former college roommate. (See more coverage by

[Cleveland.com](#) and [News5.](#))

“How can you hire someone that violated an elderly Black couple’s civil rights?” Conwell questioned.

Starr wore a blue t-shirt displaying the words “Who’s getting Fired.”

“The administration response defending McHugh’s hiring is like saying it’s OK to hire the officer who killed Tamir Rice, since he was found of no wrongdoing, which is a flawed argument,” Starr said. “Given the serious allegations against McHugh, he must resign from this position within the City of Cleveland immediately.”

Council Member Anthony Hairston (Ward 10) voiced his support for Conwell and Starr. He urged the city to make the right decision to avoid undoing progress the city has made on civil rights and criminal justice. Hairston also acknowledged the parallel that Tamir Rice was killed at Cudell Park by a police officer, the same park that many residents came out in support of maintaining during public comment.

Meeting concluded at **8:29 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.