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Committee of the Whole [afternoon session]

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

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Summary

- Some council members asked about other funding sources for the Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund.
- Cleveland City Council appears to have challenging situations.

Follow-Up Questions

- Cuyahoga County hasn't committed to the site readiness fund, according to the fund's leadership. Does the county government work closely with city government instead? Why or why not?
- Has the city government reached out to the state government for more partnerships? Why or why not?

Notes

The Cleveland City Council Committee of the Whole meeting was at City Hall in room 217. The meeting had two parts: morning and afternoon sessions. I was there for the afternoon meeting. The meeting started at 1:11 p.m.

Counsel President Blaine Griffin got things started. Most council members appeared to be present. Although there was a lot of movement, all attendees appeared to be attentive and aware.

Here is the meeting [agenda](#).

In regards to the Mayor's Office of [Capital Projects](#), the committee approved the following [emergency ordinances](#):

- [333-2024](#): Allows the city to permit a developer to install a parking sign in the public right of way for its building in University Circle

- [708-2024](#): Allows the city to get grants for the reconstruction of Redwood Road
- [711-2024](#): Allows the city to permit Quan Am Temple to install a roof overhang in the public right of way
- [712-2024](#): Allows the city to permit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum to install an earth retention system in the public right of way as part of its [planned expansion](#)
- [713-2024](#): Allows the city to permit TREO Development LLC to use and maintain walls, stairs and a building overhang in the public right of way on the near West Side
- [714-2024](#): Allows the city to permit TTE Real Estate Group LLC to use a driveway in the public right of way in Ward 3
- [744-2024](#): Allows amendments to previous legislation regarding the planned [lakefront pedestrian bridge](#)

The committee moved on to legislation relating to the Department of Economic Development. It began with Emergency Ordinance [745-2024](#), which allows the city to give \$50 million to the Cleveland Foundation for a fund that aims to prep land throughout the city for companies to then locate to and bring jobs. Council [set aside the money for the site readiness fund last year](#).

Tom McNair, director of this department, was present for City Council's questions. Brad Whitehead and Orlando Grant represented leadership from the [Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund](#). They gave a [presentation](#).

Whitehead said fund leadership is tackling "zombie properties," properties owned by companies -- many from out of the country -- where owners show no interest in taking responsibility for these properties beyond acquiring the land.

Council Member Kerry McCormack chimed in with questions about seeking other funding sources -- public and private -- to supplement the fund. Whitehead said there are untapped state resources as well as local and national philanthropy options. McNair reiterated the fund is not limited and any entity can add to it over time.

Council Member Mike Polensek said the State of Ohio did not go after these companies and land owners for abandoning buildings and land and leaving them in unsafe conditions.

Polensek also questioned if Cuyahoga County supports this fund. Whitehead said the county is "very spiritually on board, but there are so many claims on their economic

resources that they're doing everything they can but they haven't been able to write a check yet." Polensek said the county needs to partner with the city on this.

The committee amended the legislation to require that the fund agreement with the Cleveland Foundation include provisions for amending or terminating the agreement. Council Member Anthony Hairston, who serves on the fund's board, said that allows the city to change course if things are not working with this deal going forward.

The committee approved the legislation as amended.

[Editor's note: The Cleveland Foundation is a funder of Signal Cleveland, a nonprofit newsroom that houses Cleveland Documenters.]

The next order of business was [Emergency Ordinance 746-2024](#). It allows the city to enter a [tax-increment financing \(TIF\) agreement](#) with Bedrock for development along the Cuyahoga River south of Tower City.

McCormack expressed excitement about the waterfront area being open to all residents.

[Editor's note: The committee voted to amend the legislation so that a community benefits agreement tied to the project has stronger legal standing. It approved the legislation as amended. Learn more details about the project from the [presentation](#) and from coverage of a July 30 meeting by Documenters [Tina Scott](#) and [Chanel Wiley](#).]

Zach Schiller, research director for [Policy Matters Ohio](#), made a public comment. He said there were unanswered questions about the project, including the full scope of TIF payments. He expressed concern with what officials were considering affordable housing.

Yanela Sims of Service Employees International Union Local 1. also gave a public comment. Sims expressed gratitude for Bedrock and public officials working together to establish a framework for a labor peace agreement. Officials celebrated Sims for her efforts and dedication to work with City Council members, the city administration and Bedrock to negotiate a labor peace agreement as part of the community benefits agreement.

Council Member Rebecca Maurer noted that a living wage is important to sustain the kind of city that supports its residents.

The committee also approved [850-2024](#), which adjusts some jobs and salaries following a review by the Civil Service Department and the Department of Human Resources.

Hopefully all is well after the tornado weather conditions that swept across greater Cleveland. Best regards!

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