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Committee of the Whole [morning session]

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

Date: Aug. 7, 2024

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Summary

- James DeRosa, [Capital Projects](#) director, informed the committee that the [Cleveland Browns Stadium](#) needs **\$3,759,073.26** in **emergency repairs**.
- Frank Williams, [Department of Public Works](#) director, said: “Saturday [Aug. 10] we're planning to assist with any citizens that had any issues with flooding or anything of that sort. And assist with any extra clean up.”
- Williams informed the committee that after the storm: “We were able to get **downtown opened up and functional overnight.**”
- Michael Deemer, [Downtown Cleveland, Inc.](#) CEO and president, informed the council that the website [DowntownCleveland.com](#) lists free downtown activities.
- In August, 56 programs and events—which include music, artisan markets, outdoor exercise and food trucks—are scheduled to be held on [Public Square](#).

Follow-Up Questions

- Why does it appear the City of Cleveland's most impoverished neighborhoods are always the last to have power restored after outages, yet downtown is always the first priority?
- Should residents in Cleveland's impoverished neighborhoods file complaints against [Cleveland Public Power](#) with the [Public Utilities Commission of Ohio \(PUCO\)](#) for slow power restoration after outages and for outdated infrastructure?
- If the [Cleveland Browns](#) football team leaves the City of Cleveland, will the [Cleveland Browns Stadium](#) be demolished?
- Can the **Art Modell Law** ([Section 9.67--Ohio Revised Code](#)) actually prevent the [Cleveland Browns](#) from leaving the City of Cleveland?
- If the [Cleveland Browns](#) choose to go elsewhere, what plans does the City of

Cleveland have to compensate for all of the lost revenue they receive on football game days?

Notes

The meeting began at 9:18 a.m.

● Attendance

Present at roll call were the following committee members:

- Council President Blaine Griffin (Ward 6), **chair**
- Kerry McCormack (Ward 3)
- Brian Kazy (Ward 16)
- Charles Slife (Ward 17)
- Rebecca Maurer (Ward 12)
- Kevin Bishop (Ward 2)
- Joseph Jones (Ward 1)
- Michael Polensek (Ward 8)

Also in attendance were:

- Jasmin Santana (Ward 14)
- Anthony Hairston (Ward 10)
- Richard Starr (Ward 5)
- Kris Harsh (Ward 13)
- Danny Kelly (Ward 10)
- Stephanie Howse-Jones (Ward 7)
- Deborah Gray (Ward 4)

● [Agenda](#)

● [Emergency Ordinance No. 715-2024](#)

Griffin began the meeting by reading this ordinance, regarding the authorization of an agreement between the [Kegler, Brown, Hill & Ritter](#) law firm and the Director of Finance for the City of Cleveland's state lobbying services.

Jim Gentile, city controller, briefly presented to the committee. He said this was a

standard lobbying contract.

Polensek asked what issues were advocated for on their behalf.

Gentile said an information list would be provided to the committee very soon.

Emergency Ordinance No. 715-2024 stands approved.

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 856-2024](#)

Griffin proceeded to read this ordinance, for introduction and passage at that evening's full council meeting, regarding the amendment and transfer of \$534,829 within the Small Enterprise Fund.

Gentile told council that the money would be moved from benefits and payroll on the [West Side Market's](#) budget line to comply contractually with their obligation to the [nonprofit management company that fully runs the market now](#).

Griffin announced that **Emergency Ordinance No. 856-2024** will be considered for passage tonight.

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 707-2024](#)

Next, Griffin read this ordinance regarding the support and maintenance of [Public Square](#), including the authorization of [Downtown Cleveland, Inc.](#) and the director of Public Works to enter into an amendment to the Property Operations and Programming Agreement.

Michael Deemer, [Downtown Cleveland, Inc.](#) CEO and president, told the committee that his organization works to attract investments, people and jobs to the downtown area.

"Over the last several years, going back to 2021, our organization has been providing a half-a-million dollar match to the [Group Plan Commission](#), matched by the city's contribution. As part of our work with the group plan, they will be on a path towards dissolving as an organization. The responsibilities of Public Square will transfer to our organization," he said.

Griffin asked if funding for the partnership between Downtown Cleveland, Inc. and Public Square was settled.

Deemer replied that during this current year and next year the administration agreed to work with his organization on continuing the half-million-dollar match.

However, “the goal is to work with the administration, council, and all of our partners and stakeholders to really identify a more outside, sustainable funding stream,” he added.

Griffin wanted to know who would be held accountable for the maintenance of Public Square because it was like “the front living room to the City of Cleveland.”

Frank Williams, Department of Public Works director, answered: “That buck stops with me.”

“The Department of Public Works is always going to be on the front line to support,” he added.

Deemer informed the council that the website DowntownCleveland.com lists free downtown activities.

And, in August, 56 programs and events—which include music, artisan markets, outdoor exercise, and food trucks—are scheduled to be held on Public Square.

Emergency Ordinance 707-2024 stands approved.

Next, Griffin thanked all of the workers who are helping to clear, and repair, damage from Tuesday’s storm.

Additionally, Williams commended the Department of Public Works staff. He said that during the storm, they all showed up. They “got back into equipment and got back on the road.”

“When we got in on third shift, we were able to begin sweeping on the main roadways. As you saw, probably downtown, and on some of your main roadways, most all of them are passable,” he elaborated.

Additionally, Williams informed the committee about an issue at the [Glenville](#) waste yard. He said: “We couldn’t end the day because of the blockage of trees that fell at the Glenville yard, which caused waste not to be able to get in. We were able to open them up, get everyone taken care of so that waste could continue this morning.”

On “Saturday [Aug. 10] we're planning to assist any citizens that had any issues with flooding, or anything of that sort. And assist with any extra clean up,” he added.

Williams assured the committee that his department would continue to work overtime.

“We are totally committed to working around the clock until we clean up. This will be an event that we will be working in concert between [Waste](#), [Traffic](#), [Streets](#) and [Urban Forestry](#) to keep working and moving through all the areas, and all of the areas where mostly Northeast, Southeast, and West got the worst of the storm,” he said.

Williams informed the committee that: “We were able to get downtown opened up, and functional overnight.”

Polensek commented: “When we do the budget, we have got to really figure out how to focus on [Urban Forestry](#) tree trimming, tree removal, etc. And also now, tree planting because we are losing our old-world trees [with these storms](#).”

Also, he said that he needed an update on the power restoration, because he heard that it would take five days to restore power.

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 718-2024](#)—This ordinance was held.*

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 855-2024](#)

Griffin proceeded to read this ordinance, for introduction and passage at the following full council meeting, regarding the authorization of the director of Public Works to employ professional consultants to provide security at outdoor and indoor recreation facilities. And to extend the contract with [Safe Choice, LLC](#) for 90 days.

Then, Williams told the committee that the lack of commissioned officers throughout the State of Ohio makes it hard for one security vendor to cover all the rec centers. The city wants to redo the [request for proposal](#) with the aim of getting multiple vendors to each cover a smaller group of rec centers, according to Williams.

He said that other cities use other trained officers and school resource officers, who are not police officers, to boost their staff.

Jones asked for an explanation of the difference between a commissioned officer and a security officer.

Williams explained that “the big difference is the arresting power. Most of them will be able to detain, but commissioned [officers] can arrest. The way I understand it.”

Harriston suggested that community members work at the recreation centers in their neighborhoods, because they are known and respected in their communities and they can be peacemakers amongst the youth.

Griffin announced that ***Emergency Ordinance No. 855-2024*** stands approved for consideration of passage later that night.

● [Emergency Ordinance No. 848-2024](#)

Next, Griffin read this ordinance, for introduction and passage at the following meeting, regarding the director of Economic Development entering into a Special Assessment Agreement and an Energy Project Cooperative Agreement. Also, it would allow the approval of the addition of property located at 1835 Prospect Ave. E to the Northeast Ohio Advanced Energy District.

He noted that this property is actually in Council Member Starr's Ward 5 (not in McCormack's Ward 3) and asked that an adjustment be made.

Griffin announced that this evening, ***Emergency Ordinance No. 848-2024*** would be heard for consideration by the full council.

● [Emergency Ordinance No. 646-2024](#)

Griffin read this ordinance regarding constructing capital improvements, and repairs, at 100 Alfred Lerner Way. Also, to accept a gift of design and other services or to reimburse the [Cleveland Browns Stadium Company, LLC](#).

James DeRosa, [Capital Projects](#) director, proceeded to introduce the following three people to the committee:

- Mark Duluk, [Mayor's Office of Capital Projects](#) manager of architecture and site development.
- Phil Dangerfield, [Haslam Sports Group](#) senior vice president of operations.
- Greg Rush, [Cleveland Browns](#) chief financial officer.

DeRosa reminded the committee that a lease still in place outlines the process of making repairs to the [Cleveland Browns Stadium](#). He said all of the repairs are funded through a capital fund specifically for that purpose.

Additionally, DeRosa said: “We've really worked hard to pare this list down to specifically things that need to be done.”

He further explained that this legislation is seeking authorization for **\$3,759,073.26** to do the following **emergency repairs**:

- **\$3.3 million** for **pedestrian ramp replacements**.
- **\$19,894** for **gutter replacements**.
- **\$23,179.26** for **pedestrian ramp curb repairs**.
- **\$352,000** for **hot water tank replacement**.
- **\$64,000** for **thermostatic mixing valve**.

*[Editor's note: In the meeting, DeRosa initially said the cost was \$7,759,073.26. The legislation and supporting documents -- plus the line-item breakdown DeRosa gave -- put the cost at **\$3,759,073.26**. Representatives from the Browns gestured to council members that the cost is indeed in the \$3 million range following DeRosa's initial comment, and officials later referenced the \$3.7 million cost.]*

DeRosa noted that these repairs have already been completed. The city hasn't reimbursed the Browns yet.

Polensek asked **how much the city spent last year for repairs** at the stadium.

DeRosa replied: “**\$3.45 million**.”

Polensek said: “At some point, again, we might have to make some tough decisions here as to the future of Cleveland Browns Stadium.”

“And, the body should have a full understanding as to the condition of the facility and what our options are with the facility, should the Browns choose to go elsewhere,” he added.

For additional information, click on the following links: (1). [The Cleveland Brown's current Brook Park vision](#) (Source: X, formally known as Twitter) and (2). [A letter to Cleveland Browns fans across Northeast Ohio and beyond](#) (Source: *Clevelandbrowns.com*).

Emergency Ordinance No. 646-2024 stands approved.

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 710-2024](#)

Next, Griffin read this ordinance regarding the authorization of the director of the Community Relations Board to enter into agreements with [Ohio Guidestone](#) to conduct the 2024-2027 Fresh Start Program.

Angela Shute-Woodson, [Community Relations](#) director, presented to the committee. She explained that the contract involves state facilities relating to incarcerated youth returning home to the Cleveland area.

Polensek asked if the program was successful and if it should be expanded.

Juacquis Simmons, Community Relations street outreach manager, told the committee: “The curriculum that we push inside of the facility has reduced violence not only within the facilities, but also when they [incarcerated youth] come home.”

Emergency Ordinance No. 710-2024 stands approved.

- [Emergency Ordinance No. 852-2024](#)

Griffin read this ordinance for introduction and passage at the following meeting regarding the authorization of the director of Finance to apply for, and accept, a grant on behalf of the [Cleveland Municipal Court](#) from the [Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services](#).

Cleveland Municipal Court [Judge Michelle Earley](#) presented to the committee and distributed informational flyers. She said she is also willing to come to the council members' communities.

Furthermore, Earley explained that the funds support four specialized dockets, certified by the [Ohio Supreme Court](#), and other assistance that can include:

- Mental health services
- Substance abuse services
- Treatment services
- Transportation assistance
- Food assistance

- Housing assistance
- Job readiness
- Utility assistance

Griffin announced that ***Emergency Ordinance No. 852-2024*** would be on the floor for consideration by the entire council.

At 12:14 p.m., Griffin adjourned the meeting for the committee to take a lunch break and reconvene at 1 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.