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City Council

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

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Summary

- City residents continued to speak out during public comment against a proposed gas station at 10022 Madison Ave.
- Several residents spoke in support of Antione Tolbert (also known as Chairman Fahiem of New Era Cleveland) and his work with Cleveland youth despite his recent extortion charges.
- Several council members spoke in favor of the Issue 49 CMSD tax levy and talked about a couple of upcoming voter registration drives before the Nov. 5 general election.

Follow-Up Questions

- It's been a while since I've covered a council meeting, but it appears that public comments are generally more organized and concise than before. Is this due to time limits being more strictly enforced? Is this true, or is this a misperception based on this one meeting?
- [This Axios Cleveland article](#) about the proposed gas station referred to the section of Ward 11 surrounded by Ward 15 as the "Scorpion's Tail" (one of the public commenters referred to this feature as a result of [gerrymandering](#)). What is the history behind this? I know on a national level most gerrymanders are partisan (though some are designed to create majority-minority voting districts), but I don't know how that would work with city wards where all members are of the same political party.
- I noticed that the Cleveland.com article I linked to below about Tolbert/Fahiem only referred to him as Tolbert, whereas the Signal Cleveland write-up of the Sept. 9 meeting (also linked below) referred to Tolbert and said he was "also known as Chairman Fahiem." Is this a difference between traditional media and new media? What would you recommend I do in similar situations when taking notes?

Notes

The meeting was opened on time with enough council members to establish a [quorum](#). Council Member Stephanie Howse-Jones' absence was excused. Roll call was followed by a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The agenda for this meeting and list of meeting items can be found [here](#).

Public comment (seven people spoke)

Four of the seven commenters during this meeting spoke out against [a proposed gas station at 10022 Madison Ave. on the site of a former CVS pharmacy](#). Two other commenters spoke in favor of Tolbert, the [president of New Era Cleveland who was recently indicted for intimidation and extortion](#). [Both of these issues were covered in public comment](#) during the Sept. 9 and Sept. 16 council meetings.

1. Nikki Hudson (Cudell) spoke against the proposed gas station at 10022 Madison Ave. Hudson said that the gas station would cause problems with crime and violence for the neighborhood, particularly considering its location next to Cudell Park and a neighborhood school. Hudson expressed concerns about the gas station selling alcohol and concerns with intersecting ward boundaries near the proposed gas station (although it is located in Ward 11, most of the Cudell neighborhood is in Ward 15).
2. Jonathan Steirer from Cudell also expressed concern about the proposed gas station being located near Cudell Park and an elementary school. Steirer said he felt this should be an inter-ward discussion given that while the gas station would be in Ward 11, most of the surrounding neighborhood is in Ward 15. Steirer expressed concerns about how building the gas station would change the character of the neighborhood (such as it being less likely to have businesses that are easy to walk to for neighborhood residents).
3. Greg Levy of Cleveland Heights spoke in praise of Tolbert, noting [his work with local youth](#) and referring to him as a “pillar of integrity and backbone.”
4. Rameer Askew from Cleveland also spoke in favor of Tolbert and spoke about how violence generally and gun violence specifically affect Cleveland youth.
5. Michael Armstrong of Cudell spoke in opposition to the proposed gas station, noting how Ward 11 Council Member Danny Kelly's [legislation](#) to change zoning to allow the building of the gas station ignores earlier decisions by the Cleveland Board of Zoning Appeals and the [City Planning Commission](#) rejecting the plan.. Armstrong also emphasized cooperation among council members across ward lines. *[Editor's note: The legislation is set to be discussed at [a council committee](#)*

[on Oct. 8.](#)

6. Susan Zimmerman from Cudell spoke in opposition to the proposed gas station. She expressed concerns about traffic and neighborhood children attending a nearby school and said that Kelly has said he “cares only about the views of the people in his ward.” Zimmerman said she felt she was excluded because she lived in adjacent Ward 15 but considers herself part of the neighborhood where the gas station would be located.
7. Cleveland resident [James Lamb](#) expressed frustration about living conditions in the city, saying, “The East Side of Cleveland look like hell.” Lamb also spoke about what he called a lack of accountability from city officials. “[Public commenters] don’t get no answers. No answers come back about what we speak on,” Lamb said. Lamb continued speaking after his allotted time had elapsed, but the council meeting continued without incident.

Communications

The clerk read into the record information about the following:

- Six notices from developers about their applications to the Ohio Housing Finance Agency for six different multifamily housing projects in the city.

Liquor applications

The clerk read into the record notice of four applications for new liquor licenses or the transfer of existing licenses.

Condolence resolutions:

The clerk read condolence resolutions for the following deceased individuals, listed by the council member sponsoring the resolution:

Joe Jones: [Sam Ella Powers-Williams](#), [Walter Wenson](#), [Otres Dowell Fielder](#)

Kevin Conwell: [Kevin Leneal Harvey](#)

Brian Kazy: [Carol Ann Skindell](#)

Kevin Bishop: [Patricia Ann Adams](#)

All council members: [Barbara C. Pringle](#)

Congratulation resolutions:

The clerk read resolutions of congratulations for the following organizations and people, listed by the council member sponsoring the resolution:

Blaine Griffin: [La Macchina Molta Bella Auto Show](#), [Western Reserve Historical Society](#), Maurice A. Hillyard, [Zeta Omega chapter of Omega Psi Phi fraternity](#) ("Tools For Our Student's Success")

Mike Polensek: [Slovenian National Home](#)

Kerry McCormack: [Cleveland Seaman's Service \(60th anniversary\)](#)

Jones: [Keratin Barber College](#)

Recognition resolutions:

The clerk read resolutions of recognition for the following organizations and individuals, listed by council members sponsoring the resolutions:

Griffin: [Canon Medical Academy USA](#)

Kazy: Jim Bonfanti

Richard Starr: Martin/Graves/Robertson/Saunders family reunion

Conwell: Letitia Nail

McCormack: Marcie Goodman

First Reading legislation

Council introduced nine emergency ordinances for administrative and committee review. Four were for the purchase of specific items or reimbursement of services for the Department of Public Safety, while four ordinances were for issues related to property redevelopment (for example, [tax increment financing](#)), with an additional ordinance that would let the city get a grant to do a site remediation of the former National Acme site to rid it of harmful substances (such as asbestos) to prepare the site for redevelopment.

Resolutions to be adopted

There was one resolution objecting to the transfer of a liquor license to 7515 Kinsman Rd. that was passed unanimously.

Second Reading legislation to be passed

Council passed 12 emergency ordinances covering various matters, with several granting authority to the Director of Port Control to renew various contracts.

Introductions/Announcements

Council Member Jones introduced Raheem and Marietta Muhammad and thanked them for the “work they do in the neighborhood and feeding kids.”

McCormack introduced Tera Coleman, a “powerhouse attorney in Cleveland and downtown Ward 3 resident.”

Miscellaneous

1. Harsh made remarks to council regarding how CMSD received a [three-star ranking recently from the Ohio Department of Education](#), which means the school district met certain state standards. Harsh said that this ranking is the result of more than a decade of work from CMSD and shows the importance of supporting public education. Harsh spoke in support of Issue 49, which is a tax levy for CMSD schools on the November ballot ([here's a recent explainer for Issue 49](#)).
2. Council Member Jenny Spencer spoke about ongoing voter registration efforts leading up to the Nov. 5 general election, including a [Sept. 30 voter engagement event in the Cudell neighborhood](#). Spencer noted that the registration deadline for the November election is Oct. 7.
3. Starr spoke about a [Sept. 28 “Boots on the Ground” voter registration event, which is scheduled for 11 a.m. on Sept. 28 at the Zelma George Recreation Center](#). Starr also spoke about how CMSD had only one star on the “Early Literacy Component” of the [state report card](#), and spoke about problems CMSD graduates sometimes have in getting and keeping jobs once leaving school.
4. Jones spoke to the council about an ongoing situation in his ward where a Sunoco gas station owner, Mohamed Shady, reports that customers are unable to access his business because customers at an adjacent bar park on his property (especially on weekends). [A recent article on the situation said that Shady said he had repeatedly reached out to Jones “and received no response or help.”](#) Jones disputed that characterization in his remarks to council and told council of the actions he has taken to help resolve the situation. Jones also spoke in favor of the Issue 49 CMSD tax levy, saying that it’s important “we do everything we can to keep our schools moving forward in a positive way.”
5. Conwell spoke about the importance of others outside the schools (parents,

successful alumni, etc., being involved and visible in the schools. Conwell also spoke in support of the Issue 49 CMSD tax levy.

6. Griffin spoke about the situation with Kelly and the proposed gas station on Madison Avenue (see public comments #1-2 and #5-6). Griffin called Kelly an “honorable great person” who faced a “tough situation” regarding his position on the gas station. Griffin said that “nobody is corrupt because they have an opinion” and urged all involved to “exercise a little bit of patience and understanding.” Griffin also talked about how the council needs to exercise oversight over the city budget moving forward so that it can work to actively shape the budget rather than passively react to budget proposals. Finally, Griffin also spoke about the Sept. 28 “Boots on the Ground” voter registration event, with an emphasis on being non-partisan and connecting with African American men.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned around 8:30 p.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for Sept. 30.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at cleDOCUMENTERS@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.