

# Documenters

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## Cuyahoga County Council Meeting

Documenter name: Ashley Lubecky

Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Sept. 10, 2024

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### Summary

- Pro-Palestine protesters took to the streets outside of the chambers, making noise lasting the whole meeting.
- Council passed a resolution changing the public comment rules to increase the maximum number of speakers allowed at each meeting from 20 to 30 and reduce the time allotted to each speaker from three minutes to two.
- Discussion and concern over property taxes led to Resolution 2024-0321 being moved to committee instead of being passed.

### Follow-Up Questions

- How will the new public comment rules affect community members who don't typically submit public comments?

### Notes

There was a full [quorum](#) of [council members](#).

#### Public comment

In recent public comments, constituents have pleaded with council to divest from [\\$16 million in bonds from Israel](#). Opposing comments have also been made. However, this week, Pro-Palestine protesters took to the streets outside of the chambers. Most public commenters asked the council not to divest and to support Israel, in regards to the Israel/Palestine war. The protesters made noise that could be heard inside the chambers.

*[Editor's note: Council is not currently considering the divestment resolution.]*

Michele Weiss, University Heights City Council member and vice mayor - "I want to speak about the hostages. One of the recently murdered hostages was an American citizen and

was also failed by the country of his birth.” The statements made by the U.S. administration had no apology. “Were they really working day and night nonstop? Could overwhelming pressure not have been applied with increased sanctions on Iran, pressure on Qatar?” Where is the apology for pressuring Israel not to go into Rafah, a decision that may well have contributed to this horrific result?”

Loh, [community activist](#)- “Glad to be back here. It seems we have way less people in the room with us today. In some people's mind, they think this is better because all the people can really listen to everything going on better. However, for some other people, they may think differently. So, I would like to address the issue with the new public comments rules. It’s not really wrong to set rules, but the rules have to be reasonable to all the people impacted by these rules.” Loh spoke about doing things in a transparent and accountable way and encouraged council to consider changing some language of the public comment resolution.

Alex Szaruga, Cleveland resident - “I just wanted to share with you that it makes me feel safe to live in this community [knowing] that the Cuyahoga County Council supports the Jewish community in Cleveland. It makes me feel and my family feel safe to live here ... and I hope you will continue to support us in that regard.” Szaruga used the rest of his time to discuss public transit. He encouraged council to consider increasing funding to explore proposals for [Amtrak’s 3C+D Corridor](#). “I think that Cleveland being halfway between the East Coast and Chicago, we could really serve as a hub for public transit via Amtrak.” He also said RTA’s [forthcoming new rail cars](#) could boost transit access.

Sheri Sax, University Heights City Council Member - “My father was a Holocaust survivor ... so I understand what genocide really is and really oppose it. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.” Sax said Israel is the only Jewish state and anti-zionism denies Israel's right to exist. Sax asked where the outrage is over Americans still held hostage by Hamas.

Two women placed three pairs of little kids’ shoes, as well as a baby jumper, on the public comment podium. One of them, Jenna Muhieddine, held a paper with a QR code and told council to scan it to see the children killed in Gaza ((the mic was cut off before completing the full sentence). They walked away from the stand, leaving the items. Security removed the items and the next public commenter approached the podium.

Francoise Jacobs, Beachwood resident - Jacobs said her son was in a hit-and-run accident at the corner of East 116th Street and Shaker Blvd. She said everyone was OK, but they waited more than an hour for police. Firefighters who showed up earlier told

them not to wait for police, Jacobs said. She said that wouldn't happen in Beachwood and wondered why there was no police response in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

Michael Loewenstein, Matt Hildebrand, Jacob Speechwood, Joseph Gutter, Daniel Messeloff, Howard Davis, Mark Sack and two others shared public comments thanking the council for not divesting from Israel bonds and shared pro-Israel remarks.

Minutes for council's July 30 meetings were approved.

I was unable to copy and paste resolution information from the [agenda](#); unsure if it is disabled.

**Legislation introduced by council for first reading referral to committee (as numbered in the lists on the agenda; the agenda includes the formal resolution numbers):**

*[Editor's note: The majority of the following 13 resolutions would approve American Rescue Plan Act grants to community organizations whose work spans property rehabilitation, human trafficking awareness and safety, adult literacy and more.]*

Resolution 1 - referred to the Community Development Committee

Resolution 2 - referred to the Community Development Committee

Resolution 3 - referred to the Health, Human Services, and Aging Committee

Resolution 4 - referred to the Community Development Committee

Resolution 5 - referred to the Community Development Committee

Resolution 6 - referred to the Education, Environment, and Sustainability Committee

Resolution 7 - referred to the Education, Environment, and Sustainability Committee

Resolution 8 - referred to the Community Development Committee

Resolution 9 - referred to the Public Safety and Justice Committee

Resolution 10 - referred to the Education, Environment, and Sustainability Committee

Resolution 11 - referred to the Health, Human Services, and Aging Committee

Resolution 12 - referred to the Health, Human Services, and Aging Committee

Resolution 13 - referred to Human Resources, Appointments, and Equity Committee

### **Consideration of resolutions of council for third reading adoption**

1- A resolution amending Rule 17 of the Cuyahoga County Rules of Council to establish additional guidelines and procedures for public comment at Council and Committee meetings; and declaring the necessity that this Resolution become effective immediately.

This increases the maximum number of speakers allowed at each meeting from 20 to 30 and reduces the time allotted to each speaker from three minutes to two.

Motion passes unanimously.

*[Editor's note: Council began [selecting 20 commenters from those registered at random in July](#) rather than allowing everyone that signed up to speak because of the number of people speaking about Israel bonds.]*

Council also passed three other resolutions in this section.

### **Consideration of an ordinance of council for third reading adoption**

1 - This resolution is related to a section of county code dealing with Justice Center funds.

Council Member Dale Miller: – I have concerns about the bond issue and therefore won't be supporting this resolution.

Motion to approve passed with eight yes and three no votes.

### **Legislation introduced by executive**

#### **Consideration of resolutions for first reading adoption under suspension of rules:**

1 - Passed unanimously

2 - Miller said this is a “routine item” to certify property tax rates that will be levied in 2025. He explained some of the rates [at this point in the meeting](#).

Council Member Martin Sweeney: Would this legislation lock in the maximum millage in this time frame? County can increase or decrease typically.

Miller - Yes.

Council Member Cheryl Stephens - Asked if Sweeney could explain what he meant by calling the [property tax assessment](#) process a debacle.

Sweeney - I’m hearing from all my constituents that there is a process in place that is flawed in regards to property taxes. I would recommend holding this until we have an opportunity to discuss it.

Walter Parfejewiec from Fiscal Office - The deadline for this is Sept. 30

Discussion on this issue continued for many minutes. Ultimately, council referred the resolution to the Finance and Budget Committee.

Resolutions 3-7, as numbered on this part of the agenda, passed unanimously

### **Considerations of resolution for first reading and referral to committee**

1-6- referred to Human Resources Committee

7 - referred to Public Works Committee

8-11 - read into record with abbreviated titles, referred to Public Works Committee

*[Editor’s note: Council took a few more actions on legislative items to close the meeting. Check out what else they referred to committee and passed in Documenter [Regina Samuel’s live-tweet thread](#)].*

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If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at [cledocumenters@gmail.com](mailto:cledocumenters@gmail.com) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.