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## Council Meeting

Documenter name: Dean Jackson

Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Nov. 12, 2024

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## Summary

- Cuyahoga County residents appear divided on the appropriateness of the county's investment in \$16 million in Israel bonds. This issue eclipsed every other topic during public comment.
- Cuyahoga County continues to distribute American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to Northeast Ohio organizations.
- Many of the resolutions passed by council included funds going directly to local nonprofits or local governments for specific community development projects or human services.

## Follow-Up Questions

- Many speakers against the Israel bonds said that the money could better be used to help Cuyahoga County residents. A bond purchase is an investment, which earns returns. What did Cuyahoga County use that bond money for, and how do returns on investment stack up against alternatives?
- Is there an easy way to see how the county allocates money to various nonprofit initiatives and human services, of the sort included in these resolutions? How does it compare to other like-counties in the country?

## Notes

**Agenda** - The agenda for this meeting can be found [here](#). A longer version of the agenda with full text of proposed resolutions can be found [here](#).

The meeting began with roll call and confirmation that a [quorum](#) of council members was in attendance. Following that, Council President Pernel Jones Jr. read a reminder about rules for public comment during council meetings, including a prohibition on signs. A [previous meeting](#) in October was interrupted by protests related to the Israel-Hamas war

and council warned protesters that law enforcement would clear the chamber if necessary.

**Public comment** - After that reminder, members of the public were invited to speak. Nearly all comments focused on the Israel-Hamas war and Cuyahoga County's [\\$16 million investment in Israel bonds](#).

The first speaker identified herself as a rabbi from Shaker Heights. She thanked the council for not passing any "anti-Israel resolutions" and for not "falling prey" to the [boycott-divest-sanction movement](#), which she described as an antisemitic movement that supports terrorism.

A second speaker, also from Shaker Heights, also thanked the council for their support of the Jewish community.

A third speaker identified herself as a Palestinian and spoke against the ongoing violence against Palestinians in Gaza. At times in tears, she said Palestinians were unfairly expected to be perfect victims: "If we fight back, we're terrorists. If we do the peaceful route – divesting – we're terrorists."

The next person to speak, a Cleveland Heights man, thanked council for not passing any anti-Israel resolutions and for supporting Israel in "purchasing the bonds."

The next speaker congratulated council on passing [Issue 55](#), a ballot initiative that increased cigarette taxes used for funding county arts and culture programs. He then listed several Jewish charity organizations that he said support Cuyahoga County residents, including many non-Jewish residents. He said that there is a rise of anti-semitism that has forced them to reallocate resources to their own security and away from these services.

The next speaker described herself as co-founder of [Rivers in the Desert](#), a religious organization focused on providing "rapid compassionate care" to individuals and families who have experienced trauma such as gun violence.

The next speaker, a Cleveland Heights resident, thanked council for not divesting from Israel.

A man followed her comments by asking council if the county's resources were best invested in a foreign country, which he said is using them to "kill my constituents'

families,” rather than on services for county residents.

The next speaker, a woman, spoke against the violence in Gaza and said council had aided and abetted genocide there.

Another speaker asked the county to consider whether bonds invested in Israel were the best use of funds for county residents.

A North Olmsted man spoke next in favor of divesting from the bonds, saying they are proof that the county is “not neutral” and that the county should “invest in your constituents instead of investing in war.”

The next speaker thanked council for not passing a divestment resolution.

The next speaker condemned Hamas, then asked council to pass resolution 2024-0395, which would award not more than \$100,000 to the St. Clair Superior Development Corp. to create a matching program for home repairs using funds from the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA). Then he demanded council pass a resolution calling for the release of the remaining Israeli hostages.

The next speaker spoke out against the county’s investment in Israel bonds given the unmet needs of Cuyahoga County’s homeless population. This speaker also noted that state and county budgeting processes will begin soon.

After that, a resident spoke about the need for more community support for preventing recidivism – which is when people commit new crimes after an initial offense.

The next speaker thanked council for focusing on the well-being of residents and not entertaining efforts “that seek the further division of our community.”

The next speaker urged council to consider “not investing in Israel bonds” due to the ongoing violence in Gaza and the needs of Cuyahoga County residents.

The next speaker compared the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States and asked County Council not to divest from Israel bonds.

The next speaker described her experience living in Israel and working in a hospital in the town of Haifa, then thanked council for investing in Israel bonds. She also condemned Hamas. This speaker exhausted her time (two minutes per speaker) and was asked to leave the podium, which she then did.

**Approval of minutes** - The public comment portion of the meeting then concluded and

the minutes from the Oct. 22' meeting and that day's Committee of the Whole meeting were approved by council.

**Introduction and approval of legislation** - The bulk of the remainder of the meeting was spent introducing, assigning to committees for review, and approving various pieces of legislation. A full list of the legislation in question is included in the [agenda](#) for the meeting, with the full text available in [this](#) longer document. In total, the council reviewed 70-plus resolutions:

- Resolutions from council for first reading and referral to committee:
  - Thirteen resolutions fell in this category and all dealt with the distribution of ARPA funds. They variously provided funding for equipment at senior centers, for home repair programs, programming for at-risk youth, for development of parks and other public facilities, and for wildlife control (specifically, deer sterilization). These resolutions were referred to various committees of the County Council, such as the [Committee on Education, Environment, and Sustainability](#).
- Resolutions from council for second reading:
  - Two resolutions fell in this category: one for gym flooring at St. John Lutheran Church in Garfield Heights and one for the National Congress of Black Women Greater Cleveland Chapter's Bring Back the Village Initiative. They are set for a third reading and consideration of adoption at the Nov. 26 meeting.
- Resolutions from council for third reading and adoption:
  - Three resolutions were adopted after their third reading: one providing not more than \$10,000 for infrastructure upgrades and program and operational funding for Friendly Inn Settlement, Inc.; one providing not more than \$10,000 to Positive Plus for the Victims of Crime Conference and Retreat; and one adopting changes to the Cuyahoga County non-bargaining classification plan (essentially a list of position descriptions for non-unionized county employees). All were approved.

Many more items for consideration were introduced by County Executive Chris Ronayne:

- Resolutions for first reading adoption under suspension of rules:
  - Four resolutions fell in this category. They transferred funds between department budgets in the county and approved collective bargaining agreements with labor unions, including the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and the Fraternal Order of Police. All were approved.
- Resolutions for first reading and referral to committee:
  - Twenty-six resolutions fell in this category. They included various purchase orders and county contracts with outside vendors such as AT&T. Some allocated county money for human services programs, like substance abuse treatment for youth. Others confirmed appointments and reappointments, such as Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's reappointment to the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission. These resolutions were referred to various County Council committees, including the Committee of the Whole and the Public Safety Committee.
- Resolutions for second reading.
  - Six resolutions were given a second reading and moved for third reading and adoption consideration at council's Nov. 26 meeting. These included agreements between the Division of Children and Family Services with the Metrohealth System and a summer employment program for low-income youth. Cuyahoga County Sheriff Harold A. Pretel's reappointment was also among these resolutions.
- Resolutions for second reading adoption under suspension of rules:
  - Sixteen resolutions were adopted after their second reading under a suspension of the rules, which require three readings before a vote. Many of these adjusted timelines or line item amounts for specific projects, including a number of housing development projects. Contracts for service providers to the county, such as for language interpretation, were also among the items included in these resolutions. All of these resolutions were approved.
- Resolutions for third reading adoption:
  - Three resolutions were adopted upon their third reading by council. These included two \$500,000 agreements with architecture firms for services to

the county, two \$500,000 agreements with construction management firms, and an agreement with Olmsted Township for the cost of a Greenway Trail from Fitch Road to Stearns Road.

- Finally, one ordinance was submitted for its first reading and referral to committee. It would remove the five-year expiration deadline for Cuyahoga County's participation in joint energy purchasing programs.

**Miscellaneous Business and Committee Reports** - Finally, the meeting briefly covered updates from its various committees. The Finance Committee will not meet before the next Committee of the Whole meeting, so its business will be covered during the Committee of the Whole meeting on Nov. 26. Other committee chairs gave brief updates on the timing of their next meetings.

The only item of miscellaneous business was a note that the St. Ignatius High School boys soccer team won its sixth consecutive Division I state title.

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

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