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## Community Development Committee Meeting

Documenter name: Tina Scott

Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: Jan. 23, 2025

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## Summary

- The committee heard resolutions pertaining to preservation and historical projects.
- Paul Hill Jr., East Cleveland resident and founder and executive director of the [National Rights of Passage Institute \(NROPI\)](#), presented on behalf of the positive aspects of East Cleveland and to promote pride and the importance of East Cleveland residents contributing positively to and for East Cleveland.
- A presentation of the African American Cultural Garden Monument Project was presented with visuals.

## Follow-Up Questions

- Some committee members were so moved by some of the proposals that the committee added additional funding to the requested amounts. Why were none of the members moved to add dollars to the resolution (R2025-0012) for an East Cleveland project to boost East Cleveland resident morale?
- What are all the efforts that the county has undertaken in past years for East Cleveland?

## Notes

Committee members: Michael J. Houser Sr., chair – District 10 (absent); Pernel Jones Jr., vice chair – District 8; Patrick Kelly - District 1 (absent); Robert E. Schleper Jr. - District 6 (absent); Sunny M. Simon - District 11; Michael Gallagher, member pro tem - District 5; Council Vice President Yvonne Conwell - District 7. *[Editor's note: "Pro tem" means Gallagher temporarily served on this committee because otherwise there were not enough members present to conduct business, also known as having a [quorum](#). Conwell is not a committee member but participated in the meeting, as did Council President Dale Miller. A council clerk did not announce them as pro tem.]*

Public comment:

A clerk announced that Ian Andrews, executive director of [LakewoodAlive](#), submitted written public comment regarding [Ordinance O2025-0001](#). It would amend county code to require the prioritization of municipal corporations and townships in the county that apply for the Community Development Supplemental Grant program.

Brian Meng, representing LakewoodAlive, spoke and read the statement. LakewoodAlive believes the current system is successful, a system that places nonprofits and municipalities on equal footing for the grants.

### **R (Resolution) 2024-0433**

A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$20,000, to the Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS) for the Jesse Owens Family Home Stabilization Preservation Project from the District 8 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Margaret Lann of CRS presented. The Jesse Owens Family Home is at 2178 E. 100th St. (near Cedar Avenue). Lann said the goal is to establish the home as a historical home museum or community asset, complete with a historical marker. Lann said one step in the process is to look into transferring ownership to CRS and keeping the current tenants in the short term. *[Editor's note: The home received [Cleveland Landmark status](#) in 2024.]*

Since the ARPA funds are not for construction, Conwell asked what they are for. Lann responded, "To fund the work of the task force in placing the easement" and planning for the property transfer and an interior construction plan (for example, lead abatement). Essentially, the funds would go toward determining the feasibility of the project.

Motion to move the item to full council for a second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0008:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$50,000, to the Assembly for the Arts for the Study of the Arts Funding Landscape Project from the District 7 ARPA Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Assembly for the Arts CEO and President Jeremy Johnson asked for support to research to determine other funding options for the arts beyond the cigarette tax. Johnson said that even though the [passage of Issue 55 last November increased the tax](#), revenues will decline in correlation to a decline in smokers/smoking. In 2007, approximately \$20

million in tax was collected. In 2023, about \$10 million in tax was collected.

Simon said we need to be careful how we phrase the efforts for these projects and requests for funding. Simon said she has received comments from constituents who have family members who have died from smoking and oppose the projects' funding because the funding is coming from people who smoke.

Plans are in place to work with national arts research firms, SMU DataArts and Lord Cultural Resources.

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0009:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$20,000, to the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) for Placemaking Activities for the WRHS New African American History Gallery of the Cleveland History Center from the Districts 7 and 9 ARPA Community Grant Funds; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Regennia Williams, scholar of African American History and Culture at WRHS and member of the Cleveland Landmarks Commission, presented. Williams said this plan is supported by Cleveland City Council and the National Museum of African American History & Culture, to name two.

Williams said significant support will be applied to strategic planning and professional consultation and the "By the Book" reading and discussion series, which will include the biography of Louis Stokes, the first Black man from Ohio elected to Congress.

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0010:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$15,000, to the Greater Cleveland Association of Black Journalists for the National Association of Black Journalists 2025 Convention & Career Fair from the Districts 7 and 9 ARPA Community Grant Funds; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Rhonda Crowder, president, Greater Cleveland Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), presented. Mission is to serve and strengthen the community by honestly reflecting the past, accurately reporting the present with perspective, and providing support, inspiration, fellowship and opportunities for journalists.

The conference draws 4,000-plus attendees. At last year's conference, 700-plus NABJ

attendees went to the Cleveland kickoff party. There are 100-plus members in the Greater Cleveland chapter.

Jones moved to add \$5,000 of his District 8 ARPA dollars to the cause.

Motion to move the item — awarding \$20,000 — to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0012:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$10,000, to the National Rites of Passage Institute for Cultural Community Engagement Events from the District 9 ARPA Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Paul Hill Jr., founder and executive director of the [National Rights of Passage Institute](#) (NRPI), presented. Hill said he has lived in East Cleveland for more than 40 years and is seeking support to offer arts and cultural events in East Cleveland, a city that has many positives, he said. Hill said NRPI started in 1983 in East Cleveland. Hill said NRPI is about regenerating family and community (for example, transitioning from youth to adulthood to elder).

Hill thanked Council Member Meredith Turner for establishing the opportunity for him/NRPI to present this request to the committee.

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0014:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$3,000, to Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. for the Swim 1922 Project from the District 9 ARPA Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority's Valerie Thomas and Kayla Thomas presented. The chapter president was present in the audience as well.

Kayla Thomas said the objectives of their initiative are to “provide opportunities for youth and adults within the African American community to learn water safety in general and swimming specifically. This reduces the level of fear and apprehension of learning to swim [and] opens minds and changes attitudes regarding African Americans and swimming.”

Valerie Thomas cited the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), saying about 10 people drown every day in the country. About 70% of African American children and 60% of Hispanic children in the United States do not know how to swim, Valerie

Thomas added. “African American children are three times more likely to drown than caucasian children.”

Goal is to educate and train children, adults and seniors in safe swimming. Program would provide swimming equipment. Kayla Thomas said funding would also cover instructor and volunteer costs.

Kayla Thomas said in 2024, there were 17 drownings in Lake Erie; 10 were Black youth between 10 and 21 years old. Citing the CDC, Kayla Thomas said that, from 2019-2022, there were 20,000-plus drowning deaths among African Americans.

Conwell shared a story about her nephew’s near-drowning incident and added \$10,000 from her ARPA District 7 fund toward the program.

Jones also shared the importance of such causes and would like to add \$5,000 from his fund.

Motion to move the item — awarding \$18,000 — to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0017:** A resolution awarding a total sum, not to exceed \$10,000, to the Association of African American Cultural Gardens (AAACG) for the African American Cultural Garden Monument Project from the District 9 ARPA Community Grant Fund; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Lavita Ewing, the development chair of the African American Cultural Garden, presented. Ewing said she was accompanied by Carl Ewing, AAACG president, and Obie Shelton, AACG executive director. The project proposed would artistically display and represent the historical and current trials and tribulations of Black people in Cleveland.

Ewing: \$2.2 million is still needed toward the cause.

Conwell and Simon asked about the past efforts for this cause. Ewing responded they have recently received \$500,000 from the St. Luke’s Foundation. Ewing said garden representatives met with Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, who she said assured them that he is trying to give the garden a significant amount of money from the city to finish the project. A Cleveland City Council member [called on the city to close the gap last December](#).

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0038:** A resolution authorizing an Emergency Rental Assistance 2 Loan and

Federal HOME Investment Partnership Loan to Warner and Swasey, LLC, or their designee, in the amount not-to-exceed \$3.35 million for construction of 140 units for mixed-use, mixed-income, mixed-population, historic adaptive-reuse of the former Warner and Swasey Manufacturing Plant in the City of Cleveland; authorizing the County Executive and/or Director of Housing and Community Development to execute all documents consistent with said loan and this resolution; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective..

This was held.

**R2025-0039:** A resolution making awards to various municipalities, in the total amount of \$1.8 million for various projects or programs in connection with the FY2025 [Community Development Block Grant program](#) (CDBG) for the period 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025; authorizing the County Executive to execute the agreements and all other documents consistent with said awards and this resolution; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective:

- 1) City of Bedford in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Bedford Ellenwood Recreation Center Repairs.
- 2) City of Brook Park in the amount not-to-exceed \$70,796 for John F. Kennedy Memorial Park: A Legacy of Honor and Remembrance.
- 3) City of Brooklyn in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for ADA upgrades to James P. Brock Memorial Playground.
- 4) City of Maple Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$132,500 for Maple Heights Senior Center Accessibility Project.
- 5) City of North Olmsted in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for City of North Olmsted's Old Town Hall Accessibility and Revitalization Project.
- 6) City of Parma Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for resurfacing of Ackley Road.
- 7) City of Shaker Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Hildana Park improvements.
- 8) City of South Euclid in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Playground of Possibilities Restoration Project at Bexley Park.
- 9) City of Strongsville in the amount not-to-exceed \$115,000 for Senior Center Restroom

Enhancement Project.

10) City of Warrensville Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Granada Boulevard Reconstruction Project.

11) Village of Glenwillow in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for ADA upgrades to Danals Norman Payne Recreation Complex Playground.

12) Village of North Randall in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Housing Preservation and Rehabilitation.

13) Village of Oakwood in the amount not-to-exceed \$150,000 for Tryon Road Phase 2 Resurfacing Project.

Kellie Glenn, administrator of the Department of Housing and Community Development, presented. Glenn said \$1,818,296 worth of municipal grants were awarded to 13 communities. The county had 27 communities submit applications, and 13 communities were awarded; 56 political jurisdictions were eligible with the exception of Cleveland, East Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Lakewood, Euclid and Parma because they get their own CDBG allocations. She said \$150,000 is the maximum that each applicant can be awarded.

“The county only receives just over \$4 million from block grant money for fiscal 2025 compared to the City of Cleveland receiving over \$19 million of funds,” said Glenn.

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0040:** A resolution making awards to various municipalities and agencies in the total amount not-to-exceed \$1,648,012 for various projects or programs in connection with the FY2025 Community Development Supplemental Grant Program for the period 1/1/2025 – 12/31/2025; authorizing the County Executive to execute the agreements and contracts and all other documents consistent with said awards and this resolution; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective:

1) Burton Bell Carr in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Safety = Community Empowerment Series.

2) City of Berea in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Edgewood Drive Improvement Project.

3) City of Brecksville in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Brecksville Kids Quarters

Project, Phase 3: Tot Lot Project.

4) City of Brook Park in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Carpenter Park Playground Transformation.

5) City of Brooklyn in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Exterior Home Repair Program.

6) City of Cleveland Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Cleveland Heights ADA Park Improvements.

7) City of Euclid in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for East 215th Street Trail: Phase I Project.

8) City of Fairview Park in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Bohlken Park Playground Improvement Project.

9) City of Garfield Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Exterior Home Repair Grant Program.

10) City of Lakewood in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for The Merl Bunts Park Improvement Project.

11) City of Maple Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for 2025 Exterior Home Repair Grant Program.

12) City of Middleburg Heights in the amount not-to exceed \$50,000 for Craigmere Drive Resurfacing from Webster Road to Nethersole Drive.

13) City of North Olmsted in the amount not-to-exceed \$47,672 for Old Town Hall Accessibility and Revitalization Project.

14) City of North Royalton in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for State Road Sidewalk Extension.

15) City of Parma in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Parma-Parma Heights Regional Dog Park Project.

16) City of Parma Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Parma-Parma Heights Regional Dog Park Project.

17) City of Shaker Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Hildana Park

Improvements.

18) City of Solon in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for building a new pavilion by the City Community Park.

19) City of Warrensville Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Granada Boulevard Reconstruction Project.

20) Cleveland Cultural Gardens Federation in the amount not-to-exceed \$35,000 for One World Day 2025.

21) Cleveland Neighborhood Progress Inc. in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Wayfinding and Directional Signage for Historic Shaker Square.

22) Cuyahoga Land Bank Charities in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Euclid Avenue Streetscape Enhancement.

23) Jefferson-Puritas West Park CDC in the amount not-to exceed \$50,000 for "More Alike than Different" mural extension.

24) Mpac Cleveland in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for LOOS-Saving Our Own Lives in Partnership with Rivers in the Desert.

25) Northwest Neighborhoods CDC in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Replacement of Gordon Square Arcade Lower Roof.

26) Orange Village in the amount not-to-exceed \$27,640 for Orange Village Traffic Calming Initiative: Solar-Powered Radar Speed Signs.

27) Village of Brooklyn Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Baseball Diamond #2 fence improvements.

28) Village of Glenwillow in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for ADA upgrades to Donald Norman Payne Recreation Complex Playground.

29) Village of Highland Hills in the amount not-to-exceed \$40,300 for Fire Department re-roof.

30) Village of Newburgh Heights in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Kathy Edwards Park fence replacement.

31) Village of North Randall in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Housing

Preservation and Rehabilitation Supplemental.

32) Village of Oakwood in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for Tryon Road Phase 2 Resurfacing.

33) Village of Walton Hills in the amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 for ITA Pavement Reconstruction - Phase IV.

34) Village of Woodmere in the amount not-to-exceed \$47,400 for Village of Woodmere Bandstand.

Glen presented again. Glenn said the maximum amount that an applicant can be awarded is \$50,000. Glenn said the same 56 political jurisdictions were eligible (from R2025-0039). The county received 49 applications. It is funding 34 applications, so 15 were not accepted. The contractual agreements with applicants are to be effective from Jan 1. to Dec. 31.

Simon asked if there was funding left over from the program's previous year. Glen said no.

Conwell asked when the new cycle of applications will start. Glenn replied in April, and the county will start scoring applications in June.

Motion to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**R2025-0041:** A resolution authorizing an amendment to Contract No. 1827 (aka Contract No. 2446) with the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, in the original amount not-to-exceed \$1,000,000, to increase the per-household rate paid by the county from \$1,067 to \$1,700, effective April 1, 2021; no additional funds required; authorizing the County Executive to execute this amendment and all other documents consistent with this resolution; and declaring the necessity that this resolution become immediately effective.

Cuyahoga County Director of Housing and Community Development Sara Parks Jackson presented. This is a request to correct an error. Legal Aid Society requested the per-household amount be \$1,067 per house and should have been \$1,700 per household. Legal Aid thought that the contract did reflect the \$1,700 and billed the county accordingly. Auditors picked up the needed corrections. Request for approval would not require Legal Aid to incur costs for an error that wasn't their fault.

Recommended to move the item to full council for second reading. Approved.

**02025-0001:** An ordinance amending Section 714.02(E) of the Cuyahoga County Code to prioritize municipal corporations and townships in Cuyahoga County when evaluating applications to the Cuyahoga County Community Development Supplemental Grant (“CDSG”) Program.

Simon said she sponsors this legislation. She expressed concern regarding council’s casino revenue awards going to nonprofits instead of official [community development corporations \(CDCs\)](#) or cities. Simon expressed concern that the efforts can go wrong with organizations that don’t have as much of a track record.

Conwell asked if nonprofits that applied for this funding had to go through local CDCs or cities as their fiscal agents. Michael King, special counsel to County Council, said there is no legal definition of a CDC. Any nonprofit that has community development in its mission can apply for these grants under the current law, said King, who added that there are other requirements.

Simon said funding should not be going to a fraternity, for example, but rather a CDC that is more of an arm of the city and addresses municipal needs.

Gallagher said he is concerned about the allocation of the gambling money. He said the money needs to focus on organizations outside of Cleveland and North Randall — hosts to casinos that he said get a larger share of the revenue to divvy up. He questioned why the county should invest in a Cleveland program if Cleveland isn’t. Gallagher said past history showed the process went “sideways.”

Council President Dale Miller said the process did not go sideways. Miller said Cleveland should not be treated as if it is not part of Cuyahoga County. Miller said Cleveland is one-third of Cuyahoga County’s population. He said there should not be so much uncertainty in legislation language.

Jones said there are 59 cities in Cuyahoga County, Cleveland being one of them. All of the county’s cities’ voices need to matter and count.

The committee did not act on the legislation.

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

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