

PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN  
Monday, October 4, 2021; Cleveland City Council Meeting, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside Avenue: Randy Cunningham is one of ten Clevelanders to speak at the first Public Comments session at a Cleveland City Council Meeting in over 100 years. (See related article on page 3.)

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# Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

## Coalition of community groups rally to "Stop Evictions Now!"

by Chuck Hoven

A coalition of groups of community activists from throughout Northeast Ohio converged on Public Square on October 20<sup>th</sup> for a "Stop Evictions Now!" rally as part of a coordinated national effort to speed the distribution of already allocated federal dollars

designed to help prevent evictions. The local coalition also put forth a Cleveland legislative agenda they hope to get Cleveland's next mayor, whoever that may be, to agree to submit to City Council for passage on day one of their new administration.

While federal funds to house the

homeless individuals in local hotels and motels have been depleted, emergency funds to prevent eviction remain, and coalition members at the rally urged that they be distributed as soon as possible to prevent more evictions. Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) Executive Director Kris Knestrick said with so many federal dollars available to provide rental assistance to prevent eviction, there is no reason people should be being evicted from their homes. Yet evictions are happening, he said.

As reported in an article in the September issue of the Plain Press, titled *Advocates for free eviction help urge increased commitment by the City of Cleveland to fully funding the program*, two of the zip codes with the highest eviction rates are zip codes 44102 and 44109 – areas served by the Plain Press. The article states "... from June 30, 2020 to July 1 of 2021 there were 954 evictions filed in zip code 44102, and 732 evictions filed in zip code 44109."

Addressing the eviction crisis, Knestrick said evictions are the number one cause of homelessness in Cleveland. He said Ohio initially started out well in distributing federal anti-eviction funds, but now has fallen behind nearby states in its rate of distributing funds. Knestrick urged those present to lobby their state legislature and the state administration to speed up the distribution of rental assistance dollars to prevent more evictions.

Milo Korman of the Cuyahoga

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## Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods presents concerns to mayoral candidates

by Bruce Checfsky

With the majority of registered Cleveland voters staying home and choosing not to vote in the mayoral primary, it remains uncertain whether they'll decide to cast a vote in the general election



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Wednesday, October 20, 2021; Cleveland "Stop Evictions Now!" Rally, Cleveland Public Square: Loh, a member of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) and an organizer of the rally, introduced speakers talking about an array of actions and legislation needed to stop evictions in Cleveland. Loh also urged tenants facing eviction to take advantage of Cleveland's Right to Council program.

Saturday, October 16, 2021; Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods – Mayoral Candidate Meeting, Alta House Bocce Courts, 12510 Mayfield Road: Fay Harris, a resident of the part of Ohio City that is not in a historic district, talks about demolitions of houses that could be saved, difficulties seniors have with applying for help from the Senior home repair programs, and the need to give community gardens permanent status to avoid having them continuously under threat of being poached by developers.

## Mayoral candidate Kevin Kelley promises stability

by Bruce Checfsky

Cleveland City Council President Kevin Kelley placed second in the mayoral primary with 19 percent of the votes in an election the majority of city residents decided to sit out. Only 15 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Justin Bibb placed first with 27 percent of the votes.

Kelley was elected to Ward 13 Cleveland City Council in 2005. In 2014, he was elected to serve as President of Council where he serves as chairman of the Finance Committee and Rules Committee. He's also on the Operations and Mayor's Appointment committees.

Kelley earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Marquette University and a master's degree in social work from Case Western Reserve University. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Cleveland Marshall College of Law.

Mayor Frank Jackson endorsed Kelley as his successor in a released statement last August.

"I have worked with Kevin for more than 20 years and during this time, he has made hard decisions. Those decisions weren't always

in his own political interest, but they were the right decisions for the people of Cleveland," Jackson said. "His decisions have helped position Cleveland for the future and are motivated by the need to continue to make our neighborhoods stronger and safer."

Kelley was born in Lorain, Ohio. His father, from the West Park neighborhood of Cleveland, was a teacher at St. Mary's High School in Lorain when he met his mother, eventually leaving teaching to pursue a career in labor relations in Chicago. After his father died, he moved to Cleveland with the help of relatives. Kelley remembers those days as dark and challenging.

"My father lost his job, and we lost our family home," he said in a recent phone interview with the *Plain Press*. "Then he died. Our Cleveland relatives came to Chicago to move us here."

As a result of the experience, he found a career in social work. Social service led him into politics. Kelley recalls working with the just

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on November 2 for either Justin Bibb or Kevin Kelley. But their earlier mandate was clear: 85% of registered voters want neither of them.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

A low level of public engagement

in municipal elections is not new. Some blame the mayor for low voter turnout. When Mayor Frank Jackson came to office sixteen years ago, Cleveland experienced the highest poverty rate among

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, September 25, 2021; West Technical High School 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Hall of Fame Induction Dinner, Brennan's Catering and Banquet Center, 13000 Triskett Road: 2021 Inductees to the West Tech Hall of Fame; (L-R) Bonnie C. Dangeler (Deceased) Class of January 1964 in photo held by her cousin Debra Braudt (Class of 1975); Robert Krisby, Class of 1957; John McCafferty, Class of 1976; LaVerne Erwin Fox, Class of 1957; Wayne M. Smith, Class of 1972; Robert J. McKee, Class of 1969; Charles "Chuck" Schill, Class of 1972; Diane Shalala Fritel, Class of January, 1959; and John R. "Jack" Kashubeck, Class of 1966.

## ARTS

**DAY OF THE DEAD:** Día de Muertos Ohio and Cleveland Public Theatre (CPT) / Teatro Público de Cleveland (TPC) proudly present the 17th Annual Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) Festival in Cleveland's Detroit Shoreway neighborhood on Saturday, October 30 from 11am to 10pm, to take place at Cleveland Public Theatre, 6205 Detroit Avenue, in the Gordon Square Arts District. Masks are required when indoors. / *Todos los eventos se llevarán acabo en: Cleveland Public Theatre – Church, Parish Hall, & surrounding area 6205 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44102.* This free, all-ages event opens at 11am and includes *pan de muerto* (the traditional Day of the Dead bread), craft workshops, and holiday vendors. The main programming kicks off at 3:30pm with a community procession of "Skulls & Skeletons" along Detroit Avenue starting at Cleveland Public Theatre. The festivities will continue through 10pm with live music and performance, Latin food, and visual art exhibits.

**FREE CONCERT:** Violinist Andrew Sords, Saturday, November 6 at 2 p.m., Cleveland Public Library, Main Library, 325 Superior Avenue, 3rd Floor. 216-623-2848.

**QUIRE CLEVELAND'S CAROLS FOR QUIRE XI: MARY'S SONG.** Saturday, December 4, 8 p.m. St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, West Boulevard at Lorain Avenue. Admission free. A freewill offering will be taken.

**CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ARTS COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER,** 2937 W. 25th Street, Wednesday –



Friday, 2 p.m. – 7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free. For more information visit: [www.cma.org](http://www.cma.org).

**TRANSFORMER STATION,** 1460 W. 29th Street, Wednesday-Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free. FRONT 2022's Fall preview exhibition, *Grand Prototypes, Humble Tools*, thru January 2, 2022. For more information visit: [www.transformerstation.org](http://www.transformerstation.org).

**CHILD TAX CREDIT****2021 ADVANCE CHILD TAX CREDIT PAYMENTS:** Advance Child Tax Credits are monthly payments connected to your income taxes.

If eligible, parents or legal guardians may receive half of their annual tax credit money in the form of monthly payments. Parents or guardians will receive the other half when they file their 2021 income tax return in 2022. Monthly payments began in July and will continue until December 2021. You are eligible if you have a child age 17 or under that you can claim as a dependent of your tax return. If you are under the income threshold, you will receive \$300 a month for children ages 5 and under and \$250 monthly for children

ages 6-17. For more information visit: [childtaxcredit.gov](http://childtaxcredit.gov). If you haven't filed a 2020 federal income tax return and need free help with filing call 211 or schedule online help at [refundsohio.org](http://refundsohio.org).

**CHILD TAX CREDIT FOR NON-FILERS:**

You can still receive the child tax credit even if you are not required to file a tax return. Use this online tool: [irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool](http://irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool).

**CLEVELAND SERVICES**

**SUPPORT/HELP:** The City of Cleveland Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers have a Social Support Service Specialist that can help connect individuals, adults, and senior citizens with various community services. The specialists can help to connect and refer individuals to medical/hospital related services, long-term counseling, and public assistance. They can advocate on behalf of your family for public entitlements such as veteran's benefits, social security, Medicare/Medicaid, food stamps, housing assistance, Head Start, and student loans. The Social Support Service Specialists also offer support and guidance to youth experiencing stigmatization, scapegoating, labeling, bullying, substance abuse and unhealthy relationships. Social Support Service Specialist Joy Hall (216)-857-

**Legal Aid partners with local organizations and resident groups to promote business growth, home ownership**

by Tonya Sams

As Managing Attorney for Community Engagement at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Anne Sweeney knows how important it is for neighborhood residents' voices to be heard.

"It's important to build local power," she says.

Legal Aid's Community Engagement team represents a wide variety of groups

7629 is assigned to both the Estabrook and Cudell Recreation Centers; Social Support Service Specialist Krisnia Hope (216)-857-3238 is assigned to the Gunning, Clark and Michael Zone Recreation Centers.

**COVID-19****PROVIDERS WILLING TO PROVIDE ONSITE VACCINATION CLINICS FOR LOCAL EMPLOYERS:**

The Ohio Department of Health has updated its list of participating COVID-19 vaccination providers willing to conduct onsite vaccination clinics for local employers and interested employees. The list is posted on the state's coronavirus website at <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/vaccine/business-provider-partners.pdf>.

**EMPLOYMENT****WEST SIDE CATHOLIC CENTER'S (WSCC) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:**

The Workforce Development Program welcomes the re-entry community! The eight-week, 9:00am to 12:00 pm work readiness and support program provides guarantee job offers, transportation, breakfast/lunch, childcare and fulfills any county work/education requirement. A new eight-week, stipend paid, culinary academy has begun at WSCC. An engaging learning opportunity with in-depth classroom and hands on development of basic kitchen skills in a variety of food service operations including the WSCC's Ohio City Pizzeria. New classes start November 1st & November 29th.

**COST FREE TRAINING PROGRAM:** CNC Machine Operation, Welding, Culinary Arts, IT A+, Construction, GED and more. Towards Employment: [www.towardsemployment.org](http://www.towardsemployment.org), 216-696-5750. 1255 Euclid Avenue, Suite 300.

**PROMOTING ACCESS TO CREDENTIALS AND EMPLOYMENT (PACE):** Free program offered by Towards Employment for people with criminal justice involvement. Program designed to prepare people for in-demand jobs by providing opportunities for living wage employment, credential training and other

including tenant associations, block clubs, non-profits, and citizens who want to solve problems. To qualify for representation, these groups must be comprised of people with low incomes or primarily serve people with low incomes.

The Community Engagement team is currently working on a number of outreach initiatives, including teaming up with Cleveland Owns, an incubator for co-ops that are just starting out.

"Cleveland Owns sends co-ops our way for further development and help with legal documents," said Anne. "We work with faith organizations and non-profits on issues like commercial leases, debt, grants, money related problems, hiring, contracts for employees and interns, and help operating a nonprofit."

The Community Engagement team is also working on a collaborative effort with Legal Aid's Economic Justice Department and Neighborhood Connections. Neighborhood Connections is an organization that promotes community building. It recently launched a pilot project which gives out micro loans as seed money to local businesses to get them up and running. The first organization to benefit from this program was a church in Euclid. Two other businesses engaged in the program involve arts and music.

Not only are these businesses supported financially, but they also gain social capital. Legal Aid and Neighborhood Connections offer mentorship and guidance to each business through the life of the loan. These businesses can ask Legal Aid for assistance with legal documents and growth plans.

The Community Engagement team is looking to become more involved with issues regarding housing. In Lorain County, Legal Aid works with El Centro, an organization that provides health and social advocacy for monolingual Latinos, to help create affordable housing for non-traditional borrowers that have a stable income but cannot get a traditional loan. This work, which involves collaborating with community land trusts in Oberlin, mirrors a home-steading model in Cincinnati through which people enter a short-term lease to become homeowners.

Does your community group need help with establishing businesses, tenant associations, or other initiatives to improve local neighborhoods? Legal Aid may be able to help. To learn more, go to [www.laslev.org](http://www.laslev.org). You can also apply for assistance online 24/7 or call 216-687-1900 during normal business hours.

**Editor's Note:** The author, Tonya Sams, is a Development and Communications Assistant at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

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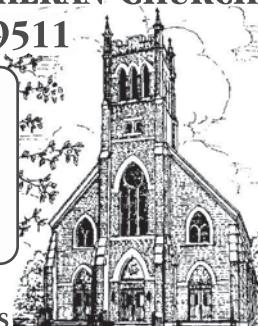
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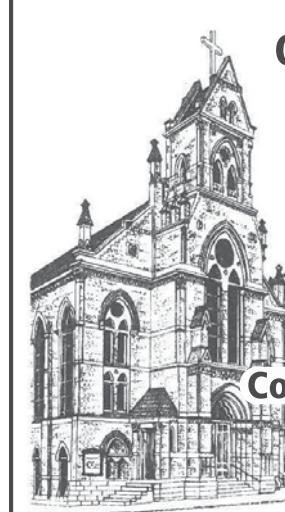
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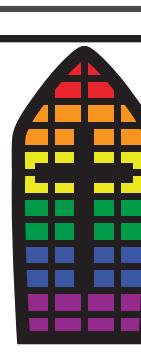
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## Ten Clevelanders address City Council Meeting during its first Public Comments period in over 100 years

Ten Cleveland citizens took part in a historic event, the first Public Comments period at a Cleveland City Council meeting in over 100 years. The occasion was the Monday October 4, 2021 meeting of Cleveland City Council. The ten citizens taking advantage of this public forum to speak to their fellow citizens and to City Council members were: Grace Heffernan, Robin Brown, Sara Gutierrez, Michael Hardy, Randy Cunningham, Andy Schuman, Ross DiBello, Yvonna Marie Hall, Mario Pollard, and Darrick L. Wade.

The *Plain Press* staff transcribed their comments from a YouTube video on the City Council website in order to present to our readers what their fellow citizens chose to say at this new venue on this historic occasion.

### Grace Heffernan

Grace Heffernan, the first person in over a hundred years to address City Council in a Public Comments period, addressed City Council with the following comments:

"Wow! What a thrill! Here I am, number one baby! Alright. Thank you -- City Council members -- thank you for opening up City Council meetings for public comment. And thank you to community organizers, a few of whom I see here today, who worked so hard to bring this practice to Cleveland."

"My name is Grace Heffernan and I'm commenting today on behalf of the Northeast Ohio Worker Center. There are two time-sensitive issues that I'd like to bring your attention to. The first is a federal grant opportunity, currently open to states to create a more equitable state unemployment compensation system. Even in the best of times, the process to apply and receive benefits -- for many unemployed Ohioans -- it's complex, it's intimidating, and its dehumanizing. We saw that in even greater clarity in the pandemic. While I know that Cleveland City Council is far away from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, I know that the pain that workers felt during the pandemic is not. And so, it is my hope that you can advocate to our local ODJFS partners & others that you may know who are connected to our unemployment system to make sure the state does not miss this opportunity."

"And secondly, I know that you are right now, this very day, in fact, considering how to spend the city's American Rescue Plan dollars. So, I hope you are able to see beyond your individual wards, to the opportunity to create some really transformational change for workers. So here are a couple of ways I think you could do that. The first is

hazard pay for essential workers -- many on the front lines of COVID 19 are among the city's lowest paid workers. You can honor their everyday heroism with premium hazard pay. ARP allows for up to \$25,000 of premium pay for front line workers. Frankly folks that's a car, that's a 401K account, that's a down payment on a house. And you can give that today to workers."

"Another opportunity could be increased labor enforcement laws. Ohio has just five wage investigators to protect our workforce of over five million workers. You can protect Clevelanders today, by setting up our own office of Labor Standards and Enforcement."

"And so, if you like those ideas, I've got good news -- there are more of them, and all you have to do is ask. I would like to encourage you to use a participatory budgeting process in the ways that you think about distributing the ARP dollars. And that's it. That's all she wrote. There we go. Thanks everybody!"

### Robin Brown

"Good evening, Council. First, we'd like to thank you for allowing comments again at City Council Meetings. How do we rebuild the great city in the midst of crisis? Today, we are asking City Council to fully support and approve the \$30.8 million dollars, representing the number of poor people in our city, for Participatory Budgeting Cleveland."

Concerned Citizens Organized Against Lead -- that is advocating for families of lead poisoned children -- which is another topic we need to touch.

"The best ideas come from the people being afflicted by the devastation being inflicted in our communities. We have sat around the tables, on the porch, on the sidewalks with other neighbors creating sustainable solutions to our problems. It is time for our city leadership to start listening to their constituents who voted them into office or positions and stop working in silos. We need Participatory Budgeting to work for us through our neighborhood small grants and other places within the country it does work -- Washington, San Francisco, even New York as an example."

"As residents in the City of Cleveland we are tired of being on life support, feeling disappointed in our elected leadership, making us feel as if our voice doesn't matter in assisting to in bringing sustainable solutions for our city for generations to come."

"Again, today we are asking City Council to fully support and approve the \$30.8 million dollars, representing the number of poor people in our city, for Participatory Budgeting Cleveland."

### Sara Gutierrez

"Hello, my name is Sara Gutierrez, and I am here on behalf of the Art Workers Collective. We are a group of people, mostly composed of aspiring full time working artists, who want to improve the material conditions of artists in Northeast Ohio."

"The labor of artists -- including but not limited to musicians, visual artists, film makers, tattoo artists, jewelry makers, dancers, writers, photographers, poets, clothing designers, sculptors, etcetera -- their labor is work. And it is cultural work that often makes a place one where people want to live and a place where people want to spend their money. It is work in the way that teaching is work, in the way that driving a bus is work, and in the way that serving on City Council is work. Because artist are workers."

"However, art workers, as described by the Economics Research Group of Indiana University, perpetually experience a lack of return on their educational training and have less access to social provisions such as health care and affordable housing compared to other workers. Art workers are faced with barriers when trying to obtain health insurance including affordability, and the fact that health insurance companies view artists as high-risk individuals."

"Art workers are often contracted or free lanced and unable to access

employer-based health care programs. And artists unions, while fantastic, are far and few. I often hear people in Cleveland discuss the sort of brain drain to the coasts of young, educated people leaving, and I want the people in this room to know that in artists circles this is discussed as well."

"And we believe that eventually, if living conditions for artists here do not improve, if funding does not increase, and structural changes are not made to support the livelihood of cultural workers, the people producing the work will leave. And the city of Cleveland, a city that claims itself as an arts and cultural hub, will unfortunately suffer for it. I ask that the next time you attend a live music concert at a beloved independent Cleveland venue -- something that has been scientifically proven to help you manage stress, alleviate pain, enhance your memory and improve your quality of life -- something I'm sure we all seek during these times -- that you look around note that the person running sound, the person who checked your ticket, and the people on stage performing most definitely don't have health insurance through the work that they are providing for your benefit."

### Michael Hardy

"Greetings, Holla, Salam Aliakum ... (and greetings in several additional languages)

"Thank you, President Kelley, Council Members, and everyone for having this session. My name is Michael Hardy, I live in Ward 11. It is a pleasure and an honor to speak before the Council and to participate in this public comment session. I glad to see a version of public comment has been adopted. So, with public comment, Cleveland joins its peer cities. Cleveland is a wonderful city. The best location in the nation. And now we have what our peer cities have -- public comment. This will give residents an elevated platform for free speech in the City of Cleveland. Public Comment brings City Hall and residents closer. It is a real commitment to engaging the opinions of the public."

"Comments from residents have tremendous value and this platform elevates the residents in a participatory

manner. These opinions and observations of the public will result in insightful thoughts that will help the city get things accomplished quicker and in a better way. Public comment might take people to places they have not been. Whether people choose to participate with the spoken word or with the written word, the comments will be made public and this helps keep people and everyone informed."

"The issue -- whether it is a leaning electric pole somewhere, graffiti, or a street that needs repairs -- these things will get attention and that is a big positive. Public comment policy opens up the city to many possibilities. This gives the public a real voice. I hope over time people will see the benefits of public comment, how it can really move us forward, and how it can be beneficial to the Council and to the City of Cleveland. Hopefully, over time, people will see it is better for the city and better for everyone. With engagement that results in fresher ideas having a public forum is very, very good government, having a public forum is very, very American. My name is Michael Hardy and I thank you for your time. Have a wonderful evening everyone."

### Randy Cunningham

"This first night of having a public comment period in Cleveland City Council Meeting should be a time of celebration. It should also be a time of reflection and learning."

"First off, we should all wonder why. Why did it take 100 years to restore what is the norm in so many cities, villages and townships in Ohio and the rest of the country? It was a simple matter of changing the rules for council or passing an ordinance. Instead, it was greeted by the powers that be in Council with all the enthusiasm that would greet a resolution endorsing cannibalism. Was it a fear that it would get out of control? Out of control was when citizens were forced to stand up and yell in Monday Council meetings when they were shut out of being able to comment on issues in an orderly manner."

"Why a hundred years of public silence? I think public comment was

**continued on page 6**

### Utilities for All sends correction to Plain Press article and additional information on vigil at City Hall

**To the editor:** Utilities for All (UFA) is in appreciation for the Plain Press reporting on the UFA Vigil at City Hall to remember residents who died due to utility shutoffs in the October issue. We do wish to issue a disclaimer related to one speaker's comments regarding nuclear power as an option for electricity generation. UFA does not recognize or promote nuclear power as a viable energy source.

UFA also wishes to make a correction on a quote in which the speaker was reported to assert that the woman who died in the house fire had started a fire to

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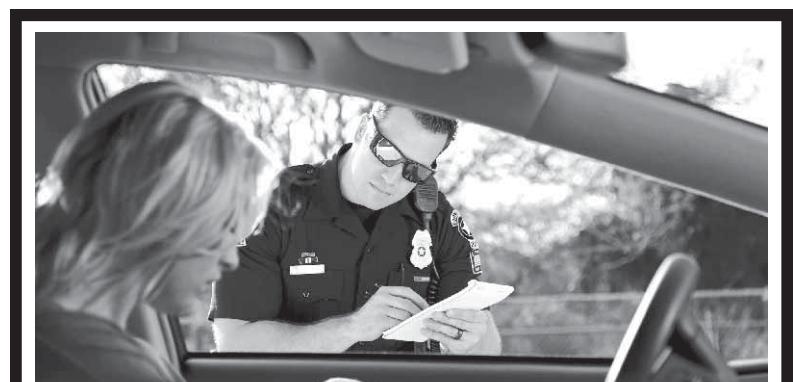
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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Saturday, October 16, 2021; Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods – Mayoral Candidate Meeting, Alta House Bocce Courts, 12510 Mayfield Road: After listening to residents from a number of Cleveland neighborhoods talk about issues of concern in their neighborhood, Mayoral Candidate Justin Bibb offers a response to some of the concerns and agrees to meet with the Council of Cleveland neighborhoods after the election to discuss policy changes if he is elected as mayor.

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## COUNCIL OF CLEVELAND NEIGHBORHOODS

continued from page one

American cities with populations of 250,000 or more, according to a U.S. Census Bureau analysis. Nearly a third of the city's population and half of children qualified as impoverished in 2005, with an estimated 31 percent of its people living in poverty.

By 2020, nothing has changed. Cleveland has the highest poverty rate among large American cities with 30.8 percent and ranks last among large cities in child poverty, with 46.1 percent of children in the city living in poverty. The minority poverty rate is 36.3 percent.

Holding elections concurrently with state and federal elections could increase municipal turnout. A recent study showed that in 2011, Baltimore mayoral election was 13% of registered voters. But turnout grew to 60% in 2016, when the city held its mayoral election at the same time as the presidential election.

In response to growing concerns about neighborhood issues, the Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods (CCN) held a Mayoral Forum at Alta House in Little Italy. CCN is a deliberative body of Cleveland homeowners and residents that seeks agreement on issues facing neighborhoods. Independent of the CDC's, government, the non-profits and real estate development industries, the role of CCN is to improve the process by which neighborhood residents engage with city boards, investors and developers.

Representatives attended the forum from Mt. Pleasant, Old Brooklyn, Glenville (including Wade Park), Brooklyn Center, Tremont, Little Italy, Ohio City, Hough, Buckeye, and North Collinwood. Representatives from each neighborhood gave testimony about issues of concern in their neighborhood to mayoral candidate Justin Bibb and Ward 6 Councilman Blaine Griffin. Griffin represented mayoral candidate Kevin Kelley.

David Ellison, a resident of Ohio City, and a founding member of the Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods, alternately known as the Cleveland Neighborhood Council, said that fighting the city one battle at a time wasn't working. Neighborhoods needed to organize.

"We need to cross the river and go beyond our CDC

service areas, to talk to people who may not look like us but share the same concerns and problems," Ellison said. "We have to find a way to deal with the city that is more inclusive and responsive to citizen interests."

CCN was seeking answers from Kelley and Bibb, he added, about a fair and inclusive process for evaluating development proposals and projects based upon neighborhood goals including historic preservation. While Cleveland shows no signs of a housing shortage, in fact, the city continues a steady decline in population with over 6 percent less residents than ten years ago, construction of new and expensive condominiums and apartments continues to expand especially in high profitability neighborhoods. Residents see no end in sight, said Ellison. As for affordable housing, there's simply not enough.

Each CCN representative was given a chance to report on activities taking place within their neighborhood in an attempt to voice concerns and dissatisfaction with the city administration. Most complained that the Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA) was doing a poor job vetting new building projects.

"The BOZA chairperson discounted our concerns and interrupted neighbors during a meeting when we tried to speak up about our issues," said Marie Anderson-Miller, a resident of Dorchester Drive in North Collingwood, where a controversially private residence was proposed on a site across the street from her homemade headlines last year.

"They were generally sarcastic, dismissive, and at times appeared defensive," she said.

Despite opposition to the project by Ward 8 Councilman Polensek, developers were given the green light by BOZA. Carol Poh, a historical consultant and member of Cleveland's design review advisory committees, resigned in protest over the decision citing political favoritism that failed to uphold the protections of the zoning code for citizens.

Fay Harris, a resident of Ohio City for thirty-four years, said the low-income housing assistance program for senior citizens was disgraceful. With a budget of \$280,000, only forty to fifty applications were being processed a year. The program failed to serve the most vulnerable residents of the city.

"The director of the Department of Aging is too afraid during budget hearings to ask for more money to combat the problem," said Harris. "We have one grant writer covering the East side and another on the West side. Two grant writers for the entire city. It's simply not enough."

Reports from Little Italy called the CDC's counterproductive to the interests of residents, while the Buckeye Shaker Square Development Corporation (BSSDC) went into receivership by the city causing several Black owned businesses to close.

In Old Brooklyn property taxes have skyrocketed forcing some longtime residents from their homes, raising questions about reviewing the tax policies in favor

of the Longtime Owner Occupants Program (LOOP), a Real Estate Tax relief program for eligible homeowners.

Julie Patton, an artist and community activist from Glennville, cited the city for not intervening on developers' overreach in her neighborhood. "Developers must put a fence around their construction site to protect the integrity of the residents living near the project," Patton said. "Construction crews use our private property to gain access and leave debris in the wake of construction."

Representatives from Wade Park and Hessler Road agreed that poor planning and egregious development causes more harm than good. Neighborhoods are under attack by profit seeking developers. Bibb was quick to reply.

"The mayor seat does not belong to one man or one woman, it belongs to all of us," he said. "But I'll be very honest with you. I don't have all of the answers today."

Bibb vowed to work with CCN as an active partner to address their issues in collaboration with city council. He committed to contacting CCN within 60 days of inauguration. Every employee at City Hall, and people he appoints to city boards, will have mandatory customer care training, he said, and if elected, he plans to instill a common set of core values throughout his administration. City employees will be subject to performance reviews to measure the quality of services. He promised to increase transparency and review current zoning codes.

"Our zoning code is a key process to make sure we have inclusive economic development across our city. The way we do economic and community development is broken," Bibb said before whisking off to another campaign event without taking questions.

Griffin said he could not make a commitment for Kelley, but said he, Griffin, would meet with CCN within the first few months of Kelley's administration, if Kelley is elected mayor. There are too many incentives in place for developers but not enough to make sure that historical districts are protected, he said.

"Kelley believes that a form-based zoning code can be phased in for new projects or redesign of current spaces. (A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form as the organizing principle for the code.) Developers find it too easy to work around current zoning codes. Form-based codes will help us with that."

Griffin, representing Kelley, fielded questions about property taxes and failed attempts by the city to address residents' concerns. After an hour, he finally appeared to have had enough. The crowd was ready to disperse but not before vowing to hold Griffin to a higher standard of response.

"I'll make sure Council President Kelley and fellow my council persons hear you," he said, adding, "I've been married for twenty-five years and if I don't get home to take my wife out for Sweetest Day dinner, there might not be another twenty-five years."



Actual monthly payment for above example is based on 252 month term and is \$16.09 at a fixed APR of 2.99%. Rates effective as of 8/26/21 and are subject to change. Fixed APR is 2.99%. Homeowners insurance required. Flood insurance required, if applicable. Maximum LTV 85%. Minimum loan amount \$1,000. Maximum loan amount \$9,900. 21-year term. A Third Federal Home Repair Loan is available as a first or second lien on owner-occupied primary residences and can be the only HELOC on your property. \$0 annual fee and \$10 minimum monthly payment. Must originate loan to get gift card. Borrowers must meet certain income, geographic and other requirements to qualify. Product features subject to change without notice. ©2021 Third Federal.

## MAYORAL CANDIDATE KEVIN KELLEY

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tice system to help people in need of food and housing, and health care. He quickly learned that most of the programs were funded by politics. It changed his life. From then on, politics became a higher level of advocacy for people in need.

Prior to holding public office, Kelley was a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, helping people afflicted with poverty and mental illness. He later worked at Recovery Resources, Inc. assisting mentally ill adults. As a member of the volunteer corps, Kelley requested an assignment in Cleveland to take care of a brother with special needs. He

met his wife Elizabeth in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. He currently lives in Cleveland with his wife and five daughters.

Asked whether faith had an important impact on his politics, Kelley said most politicians would use the question as an opportunity to promote their agenda, but not him.

"Justice for people is something I grew up with," he said. "We're on the earth for each other. I was brought up to help the community whenever I can."

"I was also raised to downplay your accomplishments," he added. "Let the work speak for itself. It's a good life philosophy."

As for decision making, Kelley believes the mayor should hear from everyone involved with the issue before deciding what to do. Consensus building is important. Some decisions have to be made against the interest of politics, in favor of city residents, he said. He cited his seven years as City Council president as an example of consensus building and decision making.

"You have to hear everybody's opinion and do what's best for the residents of Cleveland," he said. "I've acted against my personal political interests again and again to support people in our community when they needed our help. I will continue to act in their best interests."

Kelley believes his accomplishments speak for themselves. He launched First Year Cleveland (FYC), a collective impact organization committed to reducing infant deaths with a community-wide network of more than 500 partners, across all sectors and including expectant parents, new parents, and parents and individuals who have experienced infant loss.

He passed legislation for The Declaration of Counsel for Indigent Defendants Facing Evictions, and the Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition legislation.

Under his leadership, The Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis unanimously passed the 17-member council in 2020 in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, a Black man killed by police in Minneapolis and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The declaration is intended to help address systemic racism that results in shorter life expectancies, poorer health conditions, lower incomes and other adverse effects that disproportionately affects Black people.

"There's always more work to do in this business," he said. "I wish we were further along with lead paint

**Candidate Question #1 [Neighborhood News]: What is your personal and professional background? How does this qualify you to represent Ward 12?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** I'm a lawyer with a track record of work from my block, to the ward, to City Hall. My website has a full list of my work, but two parts of my background that I'm proud of are: (1) working as Ward Leader since 2018, helping to get out the vote across all Ward 12 neighborhoods -- Old Brooklyn, Slavic Village, Brooklyn Centre, and Tremont; (2) serving as an attorney for a community group that successfully pushed Cleveland City Council to pass a law protecting children from lead poisoning. This work has prepared me to represent our neighborhoods and serve on City Council.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** Born/raised in Ward 12, I have experience as a commercial finance auditor, 17 years as Executive of Director of Slavic Village Dev., and 16 years as a legislator, also serving on many community-based boards/clubs. I am a knowledgeable and respected advocate for our residents, supporting safety improvements, community/resident/school engagement, infrastructure improvements, recreation amenities, land reuse, housing initiatives and business/job creation. I want to continue serving on Council and related boards to move current initiatives forward and support future initiatives, recognizing Ward 12 and Cleveland as a vital part of the region.

**Candidate Question #2 [Neighborhood News]: Do you support diverting public safety funds from the police department to other departments and services?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** Absolutely not. In the midst of a rise in homicide and gun violence rates in Cleveland, we should not divert funds away from public safety. I do support spending our money within the umbrella of public safety on violence prevention in addition to police. We cannot police our way out of the current crisis -- and we've tried. We have one of the highest numbers of police officers per capita of any city in the country and yet we still have our current problems. My top priority is making sure we have an effective public safety budget that truly prevents violence and makes us safe.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I do not support diverting funds from the police; I do support increasing social initiatives that build strong foundations for our youth and adults. Increasing street level policing has been shown to deter crime and constituents are asking for this. We have added millions in funding to other divisions and have created the Office of Prevention, Intervention, and Opportunity for Youth and Young Adults to offer support to all residents and increase the quality of life through access and training. New programming: hands-on STEM workshops, arts training, ACT/SAT prep, internships, apprenticeships, GED prep, job placement assistance and more.

**Candidate Question #3 [Neighborhood News]: Do you support the charter amendment on the November ballot that would establish a civilian police review board?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** We need to do a lot to improve public safety: investing in violence prevention, decreasing police response times, and rebuilding the broken trust between residents and the police. That's why I support Issue 24. Even if there may be portions we have to iterate on in the years ahead, it's a step in the right direction to add a civilian police review board. Some people are opposing Issue 24 because of the improvements made since the Consent Decree. That's actually a great reason to support Issue 24, because it will make permanent the

improvements we've seen and makes sure we won't slide backwards when the Consent Decree ends in 2022.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I strongly oppose Issue 24. Positive changes have been made via the Consent Decree and the data reflects this. My Concerns: Issue 24 establishes an unelected, untrained group of 13 residents as a Community Police Commission that would have final authority over disciplining police officers, police policies, applications/examinations for police recruits, procedures and training for police officers and would also have access to unredacted files. There will be no checks and balances over their million+ dollar budget and theirs is the ultimate power with no recourse against their actions, stripping power from Civil Service and the Law Director.

**Candidate Question #4 [Neighborhood News]: How has the principal of racial equity informed your career?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** We are one of the most segregated cities in America -- and we are also one of the poorest. Segregation was planned and enforced through systems like the 1940s "redlining" maps. Today we still see inequalities like internet access along those same lines. Your zip code, and your race determine so much of your life here in Cleveland. That's why much of my legal career has been driven by a pursuit racial equity and I plan to bring those same skills with me to City Hall. In an area as diverse as Ward 12, our neighbors deserve nothing less.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** Growing up in Slavic Village we always had growing diversity in our schools and our community, I experienced it firsthand as a lifelong resident. I lived through the advent of busing and saw/heard the detractors. Racial equity needs to continue to be addressed in education, employment, housing, etc. I am proud of my accomplishments while on City Council and while on various Boards and Commissions. I have supported legislation on fair housing, domestic registry, employment protections, housing non-discrimination and public accommodations. I continue to require MBE/FBE and living wage requirements on projects receiving City benefits.

**Candidate Question #5 [The Tremont, Rich Weiss]: Cleveland Council's 2013 Ward redistricting placed four streets from the Tremont neighborhood in Ward 12 with Slavic Village and Old Brooklyn--how will you make sure resident needs on these four Tremont streets are addressed as attentively as Tremont residents on streets making up much larger portions of Ward 3 and Ward 14 from their representatives?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** Well, first and foremost, I would continue to canvass and talk with residents across Holmden, Buhler, and Rowley area, as I have done during my campaign. I would also maintain a strong connection to the HBR-MCC block club and Tremont West. But between 2021 and 2025 we also have a chance to re-draw the lines when City Council shrinks from 17 members to 15 because of the 2020 census results. I do not believe that the way the lines are drawn are currently fair -- for exactly the reasons you describe. I would work hard to make sure slices of neighborhoods like HBR are not separated into other wards.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** The 11 streets in Tremont that are part of Ward 12 form a great neighborhood. There is a dynamic energy in the residents and businesses in that area. My success in serving this portion of Ward 12 is well documented

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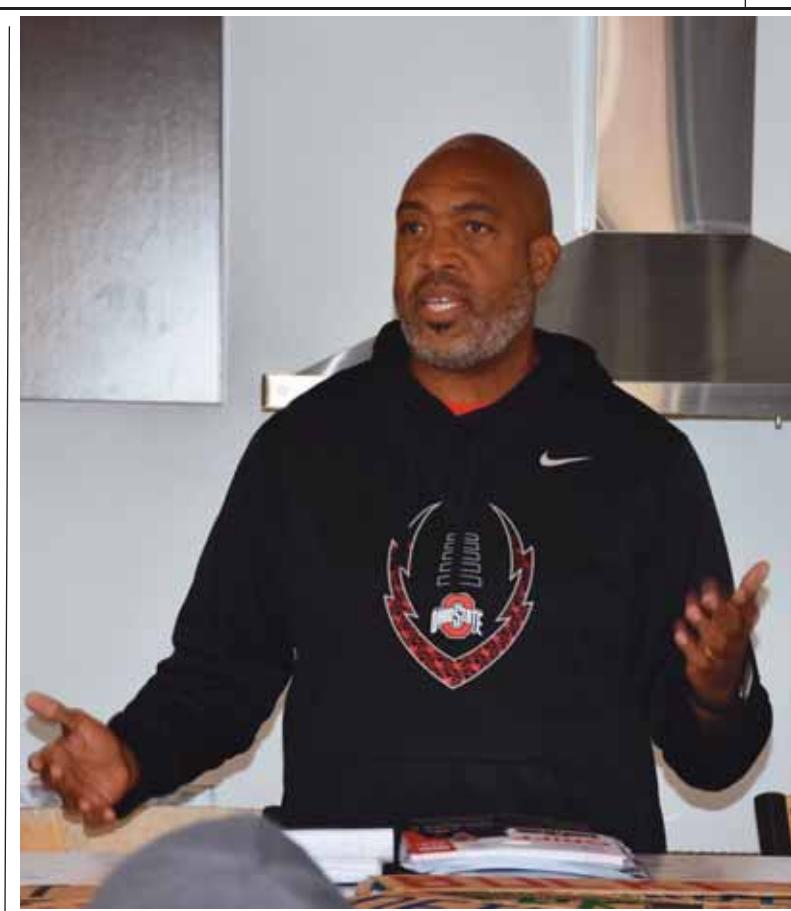


PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

**Saturday, October 16, 2021; Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods – Mayoral Candidate Meeting, Alta House Bocce Courts, 12510 Mayfield Road: Ward 6 City Council Representative Blaine Griffin, standing in for Mayoral Candidate Kevin Kelley, answers questions from members of the Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods.**

screening, but we weren't able to go into people's homes because of the pandemic. We're back on track now."

If elected, Kelley acknowledges that his first cabinet hires will send a message to the public. Experience is critical. Trusted advisors and key appointments are essential to running a government without which there's little chance of success, according to him. When it comes to negotiating on behalf of Cleveland residents, Kelley, as council president, describes his style of leadership as establishing a hierarchy of priorities first, then take on the tough issues through collaboration, and finally coming to a decision in support of residents.

He used the city income tax as an example of the difficulty of imposing unpopular taxes. "Over the years, we've had to make tough decisions including raising the city income tax. No elected official wants to raise taxes," he stressed. "But when you do, you have to consider the effect on residents. Many people are in a tough financial situation. It was a tough decision to make."

Kelley supports school levies, despite the fact they almost always fail in his ward. For a politician

seeking re-election, he suggested, they might want to oppose the levy, but for him, that isn't the right thing to do.

As mayor, Kelley would have control over the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD). As a CMSD dad, his daughters attended Cleveland public schools. The experience gave him time to consider ways to improve the quality of public education. He believes a modernized curriculum will help identify the skills students need to compete in the workforce to find good paying jobs. Schools need to have up-to-date technology. It's a basic requirement for a good education, he said.

"We have to stop thinking we can fail our students and feel okay about it."

Kelley blames political toxicity in print and social media for a low voter turnout in the primary. Clevelanders are struggling to put food on their table and stay safe, he said. They're working two or three jobs just to pay the rent. They don't have time for politics.

"There are tremendous challenges facing our city today. I'm painfully aware of our problems. I read about them every day in the reports to the City Council," he said.



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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

**Saturday, October 16, 2021; Council of Cleveland Neighborhoods – Mayoral Candidate Meeting, Alta House Bocce Courts, 12510 Mayfield Road: Brooklyn Centre resident Daryl Davis talks about problems with Air BnB's and Micro units being rented out for loud and unruly parties in three Near West Side neighborhoods – Brooklyn Centre, Tremont and Ohio City.**

## PUBLIC COMMENT

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resisted because it did not come from City Council, it did not come from the Greater Cleveland Partnership, it did not come from the Mayor's Office. It came from the grass roots, and the traditional attitude from the City Council to initiatives from the grass roots is 'kill it before it multiplies.' We saw this with the Vote for \$15 initiative, we saw this with the Q (Quicken Loans Arena) controversy, we saw this with the CLASH campaign to end the embarrassment of Cleveland's lead program, we saw this with the Public Comment proposal. City Council too often has to be dragged kicking and screaming to do anything other than attending to the needs and whims of developers and tycoons. And the people who do the dragging are the activists of Cleveland such as myself and such as the Clevelanders for Public Comment.

"So, this debut of Cleveland City Council's Public Comment Period is a happy moment. But it is not enough. It is not near enough. Democracy either moves forward and expands or it dies. And democracy should not be bound by the word enough. There is a long list of items to be addressed in a campaign to democratize Cleveland. It includes how emergency ordinances are used to ram through legislation with little or no discussion. There is plenty of work to be done to raise democracy from rhetoric to reality. Today is the first step."

### Andy Schuman

"Hi. Thank you, President Kelley. My name is Andy Schuman. I am a resident of Ward 3, with Kerry McCormack, but I grew up in Ward 14, Jasmin Santana's ward. I am here to speak on behalf of the Cleveland Art Workers Collective, much as my friend Sara did.

"Something that we exist to bring attention to is the fact that there is not a minimum wage for performers in most venues in Cleveland. So, I actually worked at a venue recently and the frightening thing about it is that often I was not able to pay out the performers that would play. Now part of the reason this happens is because – while there is a lot of things. But why I am talking to you is because I think you guys can help us put more money into the performing arts in Cleveland."

"I think that there are a number of nonprofits that do great work with providing performers opportunities to apply for grants through them. But some of those processes are a bit

bogged down and difficult to follow up -- especially if you are doing your artwork full time. And you know it's hard to fill out a grant. It's hard to know how to fill out a loan or anything like that. So, I'm asking you guys to consider entering a conversation with the Cleveland Art Workers Collective. Sara also spoke very eloquently. Our email address is: [clevelandartworkers@gmail.com](mailto:clevelandartworkers@gmail.com). Thank you very much I am looking forward to hearing the rest of the comments."

### Ross DiBello

"Thanks guys. I'm Ross DiBello. Thanks for having me. Thanks for allowing the comment. Go Browns."

"I only address Council members as extensions of civilian Clevelanders because that's what you are. You're no better than us; we're no better than that. And it is civilians, who are in charge of Cleveland. And it's not every four years that we exert that power. It's daily, with every penny, every tax dollar penny that gets spent, including on the salaries of our representatives. Right?"

"So, Councilpersons, you know recently presented wish lists for the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) dollars that we are getting. Most of you know or remember that I believe we should look at this as an opportunity to invest and help residents create sustaining wealth for their families, rather than simply 'what do we spend on to deplete these funds?' You know I want to start a public bank, do wi-fi access, equipment training, other education."

"But that is not the bulk of my comments. As citizens in such a place that we love as Cleveland, but that has such humanitarian atrocities, we haven't been able to trust City Hall. You know. And we can't do so one budget, one deal, one contract longer. We have to take responsibility for the usages of our tax dollars."

"So, I ask my Council, on each of your wish lists, who among you listed improvements to Progressive Field? Probably nobody. Right? And on the city level this would mean \$117 million more dollars for those of us who don't get our wish list filled with the ARPA dollars. So please vote no to this corporate handout. This is the definition of insanity. This is what we have been doing. Crime, lead paint, infant mortality, the defunding of public schools and the West Side Market – these things can and will get worse."

"So, I'm begging us to stop doing business as usual. One of you please become a voice of the true Clevelander."

"Most research has focused on how lead is associated with impaired intel-

## City of Cleveland releases Ten-Year Housing and Investment Plan

### by Bruce Checfsky

The City of Cleveland Department of Community Development recently released a draft of the Ten-Year Cleveland Housing and Investment Plan. Working with an advisory committee made up of city officials, for- and non-profit developers, housing service providers, funders, and residents, the goal of the Ten-Year Housing and Investment Plan is to ensure everyone has access to a decent home, provide housing options for existing residents, and attract new residents to Cleveland's neighborhoods. The Cleveland Ten Year Housing Plan will create a blueprint for programs, policies, and investment tools to achieve this goal, according to city officials.

A consultant team from the University of Pennsylvania worked with local partners Kirby Date from KM Date Community Planning, Tracey Nichols of Project Management Consultants and Kaela Geschke of Neighborhood Connections.

The yearlong planning process was launched in July 2020 and continued through July 2021. The process reportedly engaged a broad coalition of stakeholders and residents through working groups, interviews, and surveys. Public meetings were held regularly. Participants were encouraged to leave comments on a community board. The HUD five-year action plan, submitted this summer, provided an opportunity to assess whether Cleve-

land is deploying federal funds for housing and community development in a way that serves the fundamental needs of our community, according to the advisory committee.

In Cleveland, about 9,300 homeowner households and 26,300 renter households pay over half of their income for housing each month. In addition, the report states that 55,600 currently habitable homes will need substantial repairs by 2030, and 20,000 units would need to be built to replace those lost to severe deterioration. A continuing decline in population suggests that, without new investments in homes and neighborhoods, the city will lose 310 households every year between 2020 and 2030.

The 41-page report is filled with statistics and charts. A glossary is provided to define terms specific to the report and an appendix contains Community Engagement Overview (Including Working Group Recommendations), Analysis of Resident Surveys and Developer Surveys, Review of Existing Housing Programs in Cleveland, and a Report on Existing Housing Conditions in Cleveland.

"The report shows more international migration into the city than people know about or expect, especially immigrants," said Claudia Aiken, Director of the Housing Initiative at Penn-Parxis.

Aiken suggests that better leverage of city resources is needed to address

housing issues and implement the plan. Difficulty in applying for programs slows down the process for many residents. It needs to be smoother, according to her.

"Applying for the Repair-A-Home (RAH) program is very difficult to navigate," she said. "We need to make it as easy as possible especially for people facing the digital divide or have other barriers to get the assistance they need."

Repair-A-Home (RAH) program helps homeowners repair Cleveland homes by offering low-interest loans ranging from 0% to 3%, determined by total household income. These loans are only for code related repairs, mechanical repairs or health and safety repairs, according to the City of Cleveland Division of Neighborhoods website.

Aiken blames City Hall for a disorganized application process. The City needs to handle decisions more quickly. The approval process for how the funds are spent should be streamlined, she said, adding to her complaint about a smoother transition from application to implementation.

The Ten-Year Housing and Investment Plan is meant to promote increased awareness of, and access to, Cleveland's housing programs. Listening sessions with residents and other stakeholders show that many of Cleveland's housing programs are un-

**continued on page 8**

have to know who they are, and we have to know in what neighborhoods they are being most affected. And that's all I have to say about that. Thank you."

### Derrick L. Wade

"Good evening, Council President Kelley and the City Council members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the lead poisoning issue. It's an opportunity to speak in the public forum and I want to just look at a personal note from myself and look at a personal view as it has affected my life.

"As I review my journey since 1992 to raise the awareness of lead poisoning and its effects on children. I think of my son, Demetrius Wade, who was diagnosed with lead poisoning in 1992 at the age of 9 years old. And I think of the medical examiners' report that he made at the time of his (Demetrius') death which was of many illnesses. But I want to point out the urgency of ridding us and this city of lead poisoning that effects the children who reside in this city."

"The medical examiner stated that my son Demetrius when he passed at the age of 24 years old, his liver was of the condition of a man of eighty years old who drank wine for fifty years. My son was a juvenile diabetic diagnosed when he was 12 years old. He never drank or smoked. He watched his diet from the age of 12 years old. So that is the urgency that we don't know how many illnesses our children are affected by. So, I urge the City Council to look at

remedies and ways, as my other CLASH members of the organization have stated, -- the mobile labs and opening up the clinics on the Near West Side at McCafferty on the East Side at John Glenn on St. Clair. To look at remedies to rid our city of lead poisoning that effects our children."

\*\*\*\*\*

**Editor's Note:** Cleveland City Council meets on Monday nights at 7 p.m. Those wishing to speak must fill out a registration form in advance. Registration forms are available on the City Council website at [www.clevelandcity-council.org](http://www.clevelandcity-council.org) or at the City Council office on the second floor of Cleveland City Council. Registrations can be submitted between Wednesday at noon and Monday at 2 p.m. prior to the meeting. Registration forms can be sent in by mail to Cleveland City Council, Room 220, 601 Lakeside Avenue, NE, Cleveland, Ohio 44114; by email to [publiccomment@clevelandcitycouncil.org](mailto:publiccomment@clevelandcitycouncil.org); or by website at [www.clevelandcitycouncil.org](http://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org).

## +++ In Memory +++

**Michael O'Brien: 1945-2021**

Michael O'Brien, a librarian turned bookseller, came to the Near West Side as part of the Catholic activist movement to the neighborhood in the early 1970s and joined the Thomas Merton Community living in their house on W. 38th and Clinton.

O'Brien was the proprietor of the Six Steps Down Bookstore on Franklin Boulevard, the Bookstore on W. 25th and later Scriptoria Books on W. 14th in the basement of Zion Church.

O'Brien was active in community organizations and served a stint as president of Near West Neighbors in Action during the 1980s. He also mounted a campaign for the Ward 14 seat in Cleveland City Council.

Many current and former Near West Side residents have fond memories of the Bookstore on W. 25th where O'Brien could be found amongst the books on

shelves or stacked on the floor, or sitting behind the counter with his signature long hair and beard.

The Bookstore on W. 25th was a special place for people of all persuasions to meet. Community organizers and activists came to hang out and discuss strategy or post fliers for various causes.

During the 1980s and early 1990s the *Plain Press* was housed in the back of the Bookstore on W. 25th. O'Brien offered the space to the *Plain Press* in exchange for a monthly ad for the bookstore. O'Brien helped to keep the memory of the *Plain Press* alive during its brief hiatus at the end of the 1970s until its revival late in 1980.

O'Brien saved the *Plain Press* archives in the bookstore and talked to those who would listen about the importance of reviving the newspaper. Com-

munity members Lisa Oppenheim and Roslyn Block combined their efforts to write a grant to the Gund Foundation to restart the *Plain Press* in October 1980.

The Reverend Scott Rosenstein in a eulogy of Michael O'Brien told of his experience with Michael O'Brien and his wife Debbie Webb as volunteers at Zion Church. Rosenstein remembers Michael for his quiet words of wisdom while participating in the church's book club. He said O'Brien volunteered at the Zion Hot Meal and O'Brien, a former Catholic seminarian was a regular Gospel reader at Zion Church.

Many community members came to share their memories of Michael O'Brien at a potluck hosted in his memory by his wife Debbie Webb at St. Paul's Church at W. 45th and Franklin on Sunday October 3rd.

no utilities, your housing voucher is invalid.

The speaker, Attorney Joseph Meissner, stressed the importance of advocating for utility assistance programs. He also urged advocacy to get the State of Ohio to distribute federal rental assistance dollars and not to let them go unused and be required to be returned to the federal government. He led the crowd in a chant "Use it, don't lose it."

Community activist Yvonka Hall spoke of people in crisis who need assistance to prevent homelessness. She said individuals who are victims of domestic violence, or individuals suffering from a mental illness, are more likely to become homeless when experiencing these challenging life circumstances. Hall urged advocacy to get the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County to step up prevent evictions from compounding suffering during such trying events in peoples' lives.

Members of the coalition which brought the speakers and about sixty



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

**Wednesday, October 20, 2021; Cleveland "Stop Evictions Now!" Rally, Cleveland Public Square: Attorney Joseph Meissner urged advocacy to get the State of Ohio to distribute the federal emergency rental assistance dollars it has received, and to not let the dollars go unused and have to be returned to the federal government. He shouted, "Use it. Don't lose it."**

community activists to the public square rally included: Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, Black Spring Cleveland, Cleveland Owns, Concerned Citizens Organized Against Lead, Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus, End Poverty Now!, Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Net-

**STOP EVICTIONS**

continued from page one

County Progressive Caucus's Cleveland Housing Organizing Project (CHOP) said his group gets lists of upcoming evictions from Cleveland Housing Court and goes and knock-on doors to inform residents of the availability of the Right to Counsel program for income qualified tenants.

Loh, a member of NEOCH and an organizer of the conference, thanked Legal Aid for pushing to have the Right to Counsel legislation passed in Cleveland. She urged families facing eviction to take advantage of their right to have Counsel represent them in Housing Court.

Molly Martin, Director of Strategic Initiatives at NEOCH, she said two pieces of legislation that will help prevent evictions and provide residents with affordable housing access are ready to go. In fact, she said other mu-

nicipalities in Cuyahoga County already have passed such legislation. She urged those present to sign a petition on the NEOCH website to urge the two mayoral candidates, Justin Bibb and Kevin Kelley, to commit to commit to send to Cleveland City Council for immediate passage on day one of the next mayoral administration – ready to be introduced Pay to Stay Legislation and Income Protection Legislation. The website also asks the candidates to commit to supporting a renters' bill of rights.

Noting the need for source of income protection, Martin cited the difficulty of Section 8 recipients in getting landlords to accept their vouchers. She said, currently Section 8 recipients experience rejection of their means of rental payment by 19 out of 20 landlords when seeking new housing.

When introducing the next speaker, event organizer Loh of NEOCH, noted a difficulty that tenants with housing vouchers experience if their utilities are shut off. She said that if you have

achieve your goals before and after birth. Call 216-664-4194 to connect to a Moms-First provider in your area. Or visit: [www.momsfirst.org](http://www.momsfirst.org). A program of the Cleveland Department of Public Health.

**HOUSING**

**FREE EVICTION HELP:** Legal Aid offers free eviction help. An attorney by your side in eviction court can help preserve housing, get rental assistance, and negotiate with a landlord. If you know someone in need, encourage them to visit [lasclv.org/contact](http://lasclv.org/contact) to apply online for help 24/7, or call 888-817-8777 to get help. Visit [www.lasclv.org](http://www.lasclv.org) to learn more.

**PUBLIC POLICY**

**LAKE EFFECTS: PROGRESSIVE THINKING FOR THE CLEVELAND WE WANT:** A website created by David Beach is now online at: [www.lake-effects.org](http://www.lake-effects.org). The goal of the site is to create a resource for citizens and candidates for Mayor and City Council that will provide a useful collection of issues and ideas while stimulating a discussion about what a progressive city can be like. David Beach is the founder and former director of the GreenCityBlueLake Institute and served as the editor of the *Plain Press* in the early 1980s.

**MEETING**

**WATTERSON-LAKE SCHOOL SITE:** Offer your feedback about community's unmet needs and your vision for the former Watterson-Lake school site on Wednesday, November 3rd or Wednesday November 10th from 5-7 p.m. on the development site at 1422 W. 74th Street.

**SERVICES**

**THE COMMUNITY WARMING CENTER** at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2031 W. 30th Street, will be open October through April whenever the temperature drops below 35 degrees. The community center hours are from 9-4 Monday-Friday to anyone needing a place to keep warm and safe. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church will work with the Westside Catholic center to provide this service.

**TRINITY LUTHERAN FREE FOOD PANTRY AND CLOTHING ROOM**, 2031 W. 30th Street, will be open the following dates: Saturdays: November 13th, and December 4th from 9:00-1:00 for free distribution of food and clothing. Community Meals and clothing room are also available from 4:30-5:30 those same Saturdays except in December they will have community meal on December 18th and clothing room will also be available during that time. (Please

bring proper ID)

**VOLUNTEERS**

**GREATER CLEVELAND VOLUNTEER'S AARP FOUNDATION EXPERIENCE CORPS** program is looking for volunteers age 50+ who can volunteer time to tutor children who need help learning basic literacy skills. Volunteers must possess a high school diploma or GED, be willing to pass a criminal background check, be available to serve at least 5 hours per week, be available through May, attend mandatory training. During school tutoring, Cleveland Metropolitan and Euclid City schools: Students K-3rd grade, 2-3 days a week, 2-2.5 hours each day. For more information contact Greater Cleveland Volunteers, 216-961-9500, ext. 2116 or visit [greaterclevelandvolunteers.org](http://greaterclevelandvolunteers.org).

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## HOUSING PLAN

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derutilized because of a lack of outreach, and difficulties completing complex applications. Lack of coordination between city departments and external partners slows down the delivery of assistance. A more collaborative ecosystem of service providers can maximize Cleveland's capacity to manage outreach, intake, and delivery of housing resources, the report states.

The plan suggests an effective neighborhood-based outreach strategy modeled on the COVID-19 vaccination campaign will increase awareness of available housing resources. Partnering with United Way 2-1-1 to create and maintain a comprehensive housing resource directory that is accessible to all residents via the 2-1-1 system will better integrate data gathered via 2-1-1 to understand residents' most pressing housing needs and to inform responses.

During a public meeting for feedback on the Ten Year Housing Plan via Zoom, Jim Cutrone, a resident of W. 76 Street across from Battery Park for the last thirty-two years, asked about property values. His property taxes increased 60 percent three years ago; this year, his taxes increased another 30 percent. He asked the committee to explain the process of development evenly across the city. He pointed to the Nether-

lands as an example of layered development where every city has a percentage of high, medium, and low-income properties mandated for a particular development. What the process does, he explained, is keep the wealthy from segregating themselves from less wealthy individuals.

"Skyrocketing property taxes is the motivation behind recommendations to provide tax relief especially where taxes are going up quickly and affecting vulnerable homeowners," said Aiken. "If you're overly prescriptive to developers, they might go elsewhere. Cleveland is a very divided city. Developers take advantage of the easy places to build."

The plan acknowledges the problem of incentivizing development where the city wants it, she explained, and includes the requirements to develop affordable housing in places where the market is strong and development is taking place.

Kaela Geschke of Neighborhood Connections said the Department of Community Development directed the working draft. The full department including mid-level directors were involved in weekly meetings. While there are no plans to present a resolution recommendation to Cleveland City Council for adoption and passage, advocates for equitable housing will have to ensure, following the election, that the new city administration reviews the Ten-Year Cleveland Housing and Investment Plan.

The mayor has final approval, according to her.

"The timing of the plan is fortuitous," said Aiken. "Cleveland and other cities across the country are getting a lot of federal money to spend on housing right now. There's a real need to have a plan on how to spend that money. The Ten-Year Cleveland Housing and Investment Plan helps direct how those resources will get spent."

Critics point to the overly broad and general recommendations for rebuilding neighborhoods like southeast Cleveland and Hough with a one-plan fits all. Every neighborhood has a specific set of problems and unique character. Rebuilding requires an understanding of the people living there. Building from the needs of the community, not building from the developer's financial interest, is a better policy, they point out. The risk, of course, is that investors might decide to go elsewhere.

Both Aiken and Geschke acknowledge the shortcomings.

"It's a very broad city plan," responded Aiken. "It does not get to that level of detail. Not every recommendation is appropriate for every neighborhood."

Geschke suggested filling in the details once funding sources are identified.

"Putting the equity framework on the plan will help to decide what will work where," she said. "We have to decide what resources will go to which neighborhood."

**nue? A.** Funding repairs and improvements to downtown stadiums and arenas. **B.** Providing free bus passes to Cleveland residents who are transit dependent

**Candidate Question #11b [Plain Press]: Please explain your answer to question 11a.**

I love and respect the dignity of Clevelanders and believe that better public transit is one of the best ways we can help our neighbors. I love and respect Cleveland's sports teams -- but not as much as our people. So, this is an easy answer -- **B.** **Anthony Brancatelli:** The budget includes about \$670 million for spending in the general fund. Parking revenue is part of the General Fund. It includes money for four police cadet classes and maintains city services this year. The plan includes: \$1 million toward a "MIDDLE NEIGHBORHOODS" initiative to stimulate investment in parts of the city that are adjacent to suburban communities before they deteriorate. It also includes \$2.125 million total to continue a program that helps seniors with home repairs. Additional local projects from previous years have included park improvements, small street repairs and the development of neighborhood WiFi access.

**Candidate Question #12a [Plain Press]: If you support increasing city funding for public health measures, what areas related to public health need more resources?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** I am biased because I've been passionate about lead-safe housing for years, but I truly believe preventing lead poisoning is one of the best ways we can improve Cleveland for generations to come. We have lead poisoning rates 2x higher than Flint, Michigan. For every child exposed to lead, we know that child is less likely to achieve academically and more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. Committing money and resources to make Cleveland lead safe is critical.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I support investment in the 22 recreation centers transitioning to become Neighborhood Resource & Recreation Centers (NRRC). This shift includes a holistic plan to connect youth, adults, and seniors to center-based employment service, educational advancement, and improved health services. It provides programming that not only strengthens our neighborhoods, but also addresses the root cause of violence and toxic stress in our communities. In addition to traditional recreational activities, NRRCs provide programming and resources such as educational options and career preparation. These programs will impact our residents and promote wellness.

**Candidate Question #12b [Plain Press]: If you had to cut other areas of the city budget to provide these public health resources, what would you cut?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** We have many partners at the table through the Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition and we know that there are many funding sources other than Cleveland's General Fund. For instance, Medicaid has increasingly been interested in funding lead safe home repairs because it means fewer Medicaid dollars spent on healthcare for poisoned kids.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** There are no areas in our City Budget that would need cutting at this time to support the goals that I have outlined since we have already allocated additional funding to carry out the above initiatives. I also think the pandemic has shown that we need to be able to serve our residents with door-to-door services (vaccinations, etc.)

**Candidate Question #12c [Plain Press]: If you do not support increasing funding for public health, explain why?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** N/A

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I have and will continue to support increase funding for Public Health initiatives to include the millions we have already raised for lead abatement, education, and outreach. I continue to be a champion to eliminate lead poisoning in our homes as well as other environmental conditions that are hazardous to our residents.

**Candidate Question #13 [Plain Press]: As a City Council Representative what steps can you take to assure that the administration enforces and implements ordinances passed by City Council (For example, if the administration failed to enforce City Council's green screening requirement for a shopping strip adjacent to a residential neighborhood, what would you do to assure compliance)?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** I think there needs to be a twofold approach to ensuring enforcement. First, when crafting legislation, Council must build in far more robust enforcement language -- language that has teeth. Second, I believe Council must provide oversight of the administration, specifically, Council, when appropriate, should utilize its subpoena power granted under the City's Charter -- this is a critical role that Council has largely ignored in recent years.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** Ordinances should be followed. Using your example: I have passed laws governing setbacks and screening regulations and helped enforce those codes. As a community advocate, I have worked closely with Building Inspectors, the Law Department, and our prosecutors to assure compliance. I am proud to have received numerous awards for my public service such as the Community Shares "Eleanor Gerson Leadership in Social Justice" County Prosecutor "Stephanie Tubbs Jones Award for Excellence in Public Service," ESOP's "Inez Tillman Killingsworth Community Leadership Award." This recognition reflects my advocacy to hold the Administration accountable.

**Candidate Question #14 [Neighborhood News]: What aspect of local government is most important to you?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** I care about making sure Clevelanders are safe and have the bread-and-butter city services they deserve. I also care deeply about re-engaging Clevelanders with their local government and making them trust that their participation in City Council meetings and block clubs will improve their quality of life.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** Ward 12 has 5 distinct areas: Old Brooklyn, Tremont, Brooklyn Centre, Slavic Village and the Industrial Valley. Each area has neighborhoods with specific needs. The aspect that is most important to me is understanding the unique and common issues in each of the neighborhoods by working with residents and businesses and to resolve those concerns through good policy, legislation, and budgeting locally, and also representing our neighborhoods outside of the city to raise resources and awareness. For example, I have testified in Congress to fight predatory lending and remove blighted housing conditions which helped raise millions in relief.

**Candidate Question #15 [Neighborhood News]: What is your vision for economic development in Ward 12?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** Our economic development goals should be focused on creating quality jobs for city residents, and safe, healthy neighborhoods. We have many tools at our disposal to propel that work, such as grants, loans, and tax breaks. But I believe Cleveland must be more strategic and focused when providing incentives. We need to focus on housing rehab, transit, and public internet. These are investments that can lower household costs, employ current residents, and build a city of the future. Additionally, we must also build a local economy that is more resilient and less impacted by downturns in the national or global economy or pandemic conditions.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I'll continue to help retain businesses and recruit new businesses in Ward 12, working with our local CDCs and financial institutions to identify gap financing and resources needed to grow our economic base and stabilize small businesses. My efforts were recently recognized when I received the International Economic Development Council Leadership Award for Public Service. This award recognizes an elected official who has served as a committed advocate for economic development for at least 10 years in the public sector and displayed dedication and commitment to their constituency as a leader and advocate for economic development.

## WARD 12 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE SURVEY

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in action and results. Bringing resources of over a million dollars in paving streets such as Clark, W. 14, Holmden, W. 11 or supporting existing businesses such as Clark Bar and Rowley Inn or helping new businesses like Urban Orchid as well as new affordable housing with the Land Trust are examples of what has been accomplished. I serve this portion of Ward 12 with the same energy as all parts of our community.

**Candidate Question #6 [The Tremontster]: We have reported on the receding of block club influence compared to developers in other areas of Tremont--can you help rebalance this relationship in a way that empowers residents to have more influence over how Ward 12's Tremont blocks develop?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** Ward 12 is unique because you have neighborhoods with very different block club systems. Some, like in Slavic Village, have block clubs with no formal development approval. Others, like Brooklyn Centre, have no formal block clubs. Tremont has block clubs that previously had very strong control over development approvals in their respective areas. I would absolutely respect the rights of HBR-MCC to approve any development in their area. But, as in all of Ward 12 areas, I want to expand the accessibility and attendance of the block clubs so they can be seen as legitimate representatives of their areas.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I am proud of my background in Community Organizing previously as a board member of various CDC's for over a decade then as an Executive Director with 17 years of experience. Growing up in Ward 12 taught me to appreciate the power of resident engagement. I continue to regularly attend block club and civic meetings to support residents and gauge public interest and opinion. My proven history in Tremont and throughout Ward 12 is to place residents first, convening meetings, soliciting public input, and supporting our local CDC's both financially and legislatively. I have the experience, respect, and knowledge at City Hall to empower our residents.

**Candidate Question #7 [The Tremontster]: As residents of the city's core, are we entitled to the same peaceful enjoyment of our homes as suburbanites, or should we expect the noise disruption of motorcycles, dirt bikes, ATVs, and new sound systems to continue increasing exponentially with their popularity?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** As I write this, I was just woken up by an ATV on my street early this morning, so this issue is close to home for me as it does for many Ward 12 residents. ATVs and motorcycles cannot take over our streets. We all know that living in a city is different from living in the country, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't require the appropriate, respectful use of sound systems and dangerous ATVs.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** This issue involves public safety for pedestrians and drivers, due to the often-reckless driving of the dirt bikes and ATVs. Police can legally run a "live stop" on someone found operating a dirt bike and impound any uninsured or unregistered vehicle, any being operated by someone without a license. Most of the vehicles are ineligible for registration and end up being taken away. Many of the impounded vehicles are stolen, which can add charges. We have also had some good outcomes from large-scale enforcement events in neighborhoods I support the new Mayor taking a tougher stance on this illegal activity and using more police enforcement.

**Candidate Question #8 [The Tremontster]: Our reporting followed FirstEnergy sub-contractors as they maimed and destroyed our remaining Tremont trees wherever branches neared power lines--will you prioritize, value, and replace our tree canopy in Ward 12?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** Hell yes.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** As Chairman of the Development, Planning and Sustainability Committee I fully support The Cleveland Tree Coalition as a collaborative group of public, private, and community stakeholders that have partnered with the City of Cleveland to rebuild our urban forest. The coalition is striving to create a healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and equitable urban forest by working collaboratively to implement the Cleveland Tree Plan. I continue to personally plant trees throughout Ward 12 each year and have lobbied/supported and approved 10 million dollars of our City budget to plant new trees throughout the City of Cleveland over the next decade.

**Candidate Question #9a [Plain Press, Chuck Hoven]: Which of the following options is in your view the best use of public resources? Floating bonds backed by tax dollars to repair and upgrade downtown stadiums and arenas. Floating bonds backed by tax dollars to repair homes and build new homes for low-income Clevelanders.**

**Please explain your answer to question #9a.**

**Rebecca Maurer:** We have hundreds of millions of dollars of deferred maintenance on Cleveland's houses. Investing in Cleveland's housing stock is one of the defining challenges of the next 10 years. I absolutely would take every opportunity to make sure homeowners can invest in their properties.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I have supported and legislated the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) leveraging 25 million in City Bonds and an additional 40 million in bank and philanthropic funds that are strategically targeted towards residential and workforce training programs. By deploying new tools, programs, and resources, NTI aims to provide equitable and sustainable opportunities to build wealth and stabilize neighborhoods, to build communities where all residents benefit. The goal of NTI is to invest in disadvantaged neighborhoods just outside growth zones and encourage the private market to return to these areas without the need of public incentives

**Candidate Question #10 [Plain Press]: The City of Cleveland receives some payroll tax revenue from recipients of its 15-year tax abatements. Other entities that rely on property tax revenue receive nothing for 15 years. Would you support legislation to require the City of Cleveland to use money from its general fund to compensate the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the Cleveland Public Library, the Cleveland MetroParks and Cuyahoga County on an annual basis for their share of the property taxes for all current and future tax abatements? Why or why not?**

**Rebecca Maurer:** I would absolutely support a change to Cleveland's tax abatement policy, because right now it is favoring some of our wealthiest residents who buy new properties for \$300,000+ dollars, while leaving our long-term residents out in the cold with increased property taxes. Given the ways that the MetroParks and the County are funded separately from the city, I don't think I can give a blanket yes to the above policy proposal, especially for past tax abatements. But I will absolutely commit to changes in the abatement system.

**Anthony Brancatelli:** I support the study led by the nationally recognized Reinvestment Fund with assistance from Greater Ohio Policy Center, PFM Group Consulting, Neighborhood Connections and Leverage Point who recommended: • Continue to offer a tax abatement for residential properties tied to green construction as a productive tool for encouraging new development that both retains existing residents and helps attract new residents to the city. • Implement a "but-for" test that requires a determination that the activity that qualifies for an abatement would not occur without the incentive. • Establish a framework for community benefits agreements (CBAs)

**Candidate Question #11a [Plain Press]: Which in your view is the best use of City of Cleveland Parking Tax Revenues?**