



Dale Miller
Cuyahoga County Council District 2

May 23, 2012

The Plain Dealer
Editorial Board
1801 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114

To clarify some points regarding the Plain Dealer article of May 16, and the May 22 editorial, the proposed Cuyahoga County Charter amendment does not give up Council's authority with respect to the Board of Revision; it actually strengthens it. Currently, the Board of Revision is seen as consisting of the County Executive, Fiscal Officer, and Treasurer, with no Council representation. Under the proposed amendment, the Board of Revision would consist of the Executive, Fiscal Officer, and one member of Council, providing Council participation in the entire operation.

Under the amendment, the Board of Revision itself would choose the hearing board members that handle the complaints, rather than the Executive and Council directly hiring members of the hearing boards. Because the Board of Revision is an independent board, it makes sense that it would do its own hiring. The Council will continue to have major input on the hiring of hearing board members, both through its representative on the Board of Revision and its confirmation authority on the hearing board appointments.

Second, the proposed charter amendment addresses serious weaknesses in the current Charter language. Currently, the Charter does not distinguish between the responsibilities of the Board of Revision and the responsibilities of the hearing boards. The Board of Revision has administrative authority over the appeals process, while the hearing boards actually hear the complaints. The ambiguous language in the current Charter is causing uncertainty over who has administrative authority for the hearing boards. The proposed amendment differentiates between the Board of Revision and the hearing boards by clearly defining the administrative, hiring, and compensation policies for both the Board of Revision's support staff and the hearing boards.

Third, the proposed amendment increases accountability by specifying a process to insure that members of the hearing Boards are highly qualified in appraisal, real estate, and/or law. Recent hearing board hires have met these higher standards, but the qualifications should be permanently provided for in the Charter.

Finally, the amendment eliminates the requirement that the three members of each hearing board not be members of the same political party. In appointing hearing board members, the County Council had to pass over higher rated candidates to meet this requirement. Distinguishing political affiliation may be important for some boards, for example, the Board of Elections, but the act of hearing property valuation appeals is not political party sensitive. We should be able to choose the best qualified people.

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The writers of our new Cuyahoga County Charter did a remarkable job in creating the framework for our new County government. However, some weaknesses have become visible with experience, and the Board of Revision amendment would provide a much needed correction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dale Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dale Miller