



C. Ellen Connally
Cuyahoga County Council District 9

The Cuyahoga County Charter, adopted by voters in 2009, is in essence the constitution of the County. Pursuant to Section 12 and the Ohio Constitution, proposed amendments to the Charter may be put on the ballot in three ways.

One way is through a Charter Review Commission, composed of nine county residents, meeting at designated intervals, who can consider possible changes. Charter Review Commission recommendations are then sent to the County Council who must determine whether or not the item goes on the ballot. The first Commission is to be established in September 2012, after being recommended by the County Executive and confirmed by County Council. The County Council is eagerly awaiting the submission of names by the County Executive so that this confirmation process can begin.

Other ways of proposing amendments are found in Section 10.04 of the Ohio Constitution and Section 12.10 of the Charter. These give Council the authority to place amendments on the ballot with a vote of two thirds of Council. Amendments can also be placed on the ballot if citizens secure a sufficient number of signatures. But in all cases, the ultimate decision to amend the Charter rests with the voters of Cuyahoga County.

Over the past several months, the County Council at the direction of Rules Committee Chairperson Dave Greenspan (District 1) has conducted 14 public hearings to date, with at least three more scheduled on a total of 13 possible Charter changes. The suggested amendments - some of which have been proposed by the County Executive, some from Council members, and one from the Courts - have had readings before Council, have been published on line and further vetted in two town hall meetings. Already, many of the proposals have been referred to the Charter Review Commission - which means that Council feels that these are substantive changes to the Charter that must be considered in a broader forum.

There are, however, other matters that Council believes may be - and I repeat may be - appropriate for submission to the voters at this time. These matters are still being debated in public meetings. We encourage those who were engaged in the drafting of the original charter and interested county residents to attend our meetings, or contact councilpersons to voice their opinions regarding proposed amendments.

Those who have made allegations as to the alleged impropriety of Council's consideration of possible amendments now should perhaps read the Charter or the Ohio Constitution - or attend the meetings or public forums. The voters of this county have elected eleven persons to serve on County Council. Each and every member takes this position very seriously. We fully recognize the significance of any change in the Charter but we also recognize that, after working with this document for over 18 months, there are some areas that need clarification or correction. We are sticking to the Charter!

C. Ellen Connally
President, Cuyahoga County Council
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