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COUNTY COUNCIL VOTES TO PLACE TWO CHARTER AMENDMENTS ON BALLOT IN 2012

Further discussions by County Council and Charter Commission planned

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Council has decided to continue deliberations on possible charter amendments and forego placing all but two proposals on the November 6 general election ballot.

The first is a change from a Charter-mandated annual budget cycle to a more flexible biennial budget cycle, allowing the County to take advantage of longer-term, economically efficient contracts. The second is an adjustment in terms for the independent County Audit Committee and Internal Auditor in order to prevent a possible interruption in the work of the Department of Internal Auditing at the end of the County Executive's term.

While there is no requirement to place any amendments before the voters this year, Council has been considering proposals, based on 18 months of actual experience in the new government, using the criteria of urgency and clarity to determine the need for any immediate changes. Council President C. Ellen Connally and Rules Committee Chair David Greenspan said today that Council has decided to refer ten of the twelve original proposals to the Charter Review Commission, for a more extensive public hearing, before seeking voter approval. Council began the process, as authorized by Article 10, Section 4 of the Ohio Constitution, in February. Today's vote to place two amendments on the November ballot marks the end of Council's process and provides voters with the opportunity to decide whether the two changes will be incorporated in the Charter. Additionally, placing these amendments on the ballot this November will allow the Charter Review Commission more time to review additional critical charter amendments for future consideration by the electors.

A total of 16 public meetings have been held to discuss proposed charter amendments, including four Council meetings, six standing committee hearings, four Committees of the Whole and two town hall-style meetings. In addition to changes proposed by Council members, the County Executive and the County's Administrative Judges have also made recommendations for Charter changes.

"This Council would prefer that the Charter was more clear in certain areas," said Greenspan. "There is ambiguous, conflicting and inconsistent language in this Charter, which pose challenges to operating this government in an efficient manner."

He noted, however, that more time is needed to craft appropriate language for most of the amendments addressing the varied and complex issues that have been raised during the public input process.

Connally said the vast majority of amendments studied by Council will be referred to the Charter Review Commission, which will be appointed in September.

"I want to thank Dave Greenspan, the members of his committee, the members of County Council, and all who participated in the hearings over the last few months. Your recommendations, comments and participation will lead us to a stronger charter and foundation for this fledgling county government," said Connally.

The Council President said County Council has been diligent in its review and will continue the process in accordance with Section 12.10 of the Cuyahoga County Charter, which states:

"Proposed amendments to this Charter shall be submitted to the electors of the County in the manner provided by the Ohio Constitution."

Read together, Sec. 12.09 of the Charter and Article 10, Section 4 of the Ohio Constitution specify three ways in which a county may present an item on the ballot:

1. By a two-thirds vote of its legislative authority.
2. Upon petition of 8 percent of the electors of the county.
3. By a majority vote of a charter review commission and approval by the legislative body of the county.

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