



CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

Council Committee of the Whole

April 19, 2026

12:00 PM

City Hall – Executive Conference Room Council Workshop

An executive session may be held in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Cleveland Heights Codified Ordinances Chapter 107.01(c).

Agenda

- 1) Call to Order/Roll Call**
- 2) Welcome & Introductions (5 min)**
Council President, Tony Cuda
 - a. Councilmember Worksheets
- 3) Role of City Council (30 min)**
- 4) Personal Vision Summaries (20 min)**
- 5) Overview of Legislative Issues Facing the Administration in 2026 (15 min)**
Mayor Jim Petras
- 6) Individual Legislative Goals (50 min)**
- 7) Organizing and Prioritizing Discussion Topics (20 min)**
- 8) Council Rules, Procedures, and Practices (40 min)**
Director of Law, Bill Hanna
- 9) Next Steps and Action Items (20 min)**
- 10) Adjourn**

Formal Roles

- Create, review, amend & approve legislation
- Attend council & committee meetings
- Budget authority
- Oversight authority
- Chair, serve on committees
- Use power of inquiry to get timely information to make informed decisions
- Staff resident committees
- Replace vacancies on council
- Act as check & balance on mayoral power
- (Prez) Set agenda; Chair council meetings; Make committee assignments; Supervise and evaluate Clerk of Council; Meet with mayor and law director weekly and bi-weekly

Informal Roles

- ▶ Resident advocacy
- ▶ Respond to resident communications
- ▶ Ombudsman
- ▶ Attend community events

Vision Statement

- ▶ I want to live in a CH that has safe, well-maintained neighborhoods, thriving business districts and top-notch city services. I want our housing, parks & rec, and economic development initiatives to attract young families and singles to live long-term in a thriving, diverse CH that leaves no neighborhood behind.

Administrations' 2026 Priorities & Beyond

- ▶ Get our fiscal house in order
- ▶ Improve city services
- ▶ Redevelopment of Severance
- ▶ Get HR Dept up & running/Put goals and accountability in place
- ▶ Get 5-Year capital plan in place
- ▶ Complete ARPA spend down
- ▶ Settle Shaker Lakes situation
- ▶ Get security cameras installed
- ▶ Put together a 2027 budget that accomplishes our collective values
- ▶ Work collaboratively with council to accomplish our collective goals

Legislative Goals 2026

- ▶ First, I want to make sure that, as council president, I am helping council members accomplish their legislative goals
- ▶ Pass legislation that regulates Short Term Rentals
- ▶ Pass legislation that revises our housing code
- ▶ Pass legislation updating Section 111 of our Council code
- ▶ Pass legislation funding an animal control strategy
- ▶ Pass legislation funding a “welcome wagon” for new residents & businesses
- ▶ Contract for merchant’s association that includes storefront renovation
- ▶ Pass legislation that properly funds bulk pickup
- ▶ Pass a fiscally responsible budget that focuses on continued improvement of city services

Council Rules, Procedures & Practices

- ▶ Council vacancy process/application
- ▶ Council legislative process
- ▶ Council community engagement
- ▶ Council responding to AI generated anonymous emails
- ▶ Guidelines for Councilmembers' use of social media
- ▶ Council public comment policy/decorum
- ▶ Clerk of Council operational considerations
- ▶ City Council holiday policy

Councilmember Cobb Retreat Worksheet

What are the formal roles for councilperson?

- Legislative (creates, debates and vote), budgetary approval and control and general oversight of the executive branch. Additionally, representation of constituents by serving as a conduit for constituent complaints and concerns. Active participation in outside community events, merchant associations and special improvement districts.

What separates us from the other two branches of government?

- The executive branch oversees city departments, is responsible for managing the daily affairs of the City, serves as the hiring authority and implements and enforces laws passed by Council.
- The Municipal Court handles violations of city ordinances and certain state laws (housing, traffic, criminal misdemeanors, civil disputes under \$15,000).

Goals that drive my priorities.

- Passing legislation that helps the City deliver first rate services.
- Passing legislation that maintains and improves our infrastructure and public buildings and grounds.
- Passing legislation that reflects responsible budgeting.
- Passing legislation that supports housing.
- Passing legislation that helps with economic development.
- Making sure that any legislation passed is grounded in common sense and attempts to anticipate unforeseen consequences.

Priorities of the administration.

- Improve the work force culture among City workers so that we have an accountable, effective and motivated workforce that is simply not going through the motions.
- Clean up any lingering budgetary problems and planning realistic budgets for the remainder of the current administration.
- Develop a vision and plan for Severance that is realistic.
- Set aside adequate funding and establish a schedule to begin to addressing years of neglect of our public buildings and roadways.
- Determine what sewer rate increases will be necessary to bring the City into compliance with EPA requirements.
- Continue with residential, infill development of City-owned properties.
- Ascertain what zoning changes should be recommended to Council.
- Explore ways to increase income to contribute to the budget.
- Implement a plan to renovate and or construct an outdoor pool.
- Explore ways to collaborate with school district, adjacent communities and the various entities that the City severed relationships with previously such as Friends of Cain Park, Heights Tree People, Green Team, etc.

Legislative Goals.

- Determine what revisions are needed to the City ordinances in light of the new charter.
- Consult with fellow councilmembers on what changes are needed to Title Three of the Administrative Code.

Rules and Procedures

Anything that reduces unnecessary Council or committee meetings.

MEMO

TO: Members of Cleveland Heights City Council

FROM: Councilwoman Jessica Cohen

DATE: April 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Response to Council Workshop Agenda Items: 2026 Council Goals and Procedures

In preparation for our upcoming half-day workshop, I am pleased to share the following responses to the "Before We Meet" prompts provided in our agenda. These reflections are grounded in my campaign platform and the formal policy priorities I have outlined for this term.

Formal Roles for Council: Under Article III, Section 1 of the City Charter, the legislative power of the City is vested exclusively in our seven-member Council. Our primary role is policy-setting and fiscal oversight, distinct from the Executive branch (the Mayor), which is charged with the administrative service and enforcement of the laws we enact. We deal with the administrative service solely through the Mayor or City Administrator, ensuring that while we set policy direction, we do not overstep into day-to-day management. This structure further separates us from the Judicial branch, represented by the Municipal Court, which operates under the general laws of Ohio.

Vision for Cleveland Heights: My vision is to revitalize Cleveland Heights by repairing our core municipal services and restoring public trust through transparent governance, public policy leadership, and deep community engagement. We must ensure our city remains a premier residential community by protecting property values and modernizing our regulatory frameworks to meet the needs of both current residents and future generations.

Priorities of the Administration: Based on recent communications from Mayor Petras, in my view the administration's primary focus is on fiscal responsibility and infrastructure and operational stabilization. Key priorities include:

- **Financial and Operational Oversight:** Correcting legacy issues in the finance department and establishing processes and procedures for effective oversight moving forward. Ensuring all departments are operating efficiently and effectively.
- **Infrastructure:** Executing an expanded 2026 road repavement program and addressing the significant pothole backlog through increased crews and potential weekend shifts.
- **Economic and Community Development:** Growing our commercial and residential tax base through infill housing, attracting and supporting businesses of all sizes, and making substantial progress on long-term development concerns including Severance.

Individual Legislative Goals: My legislative priorities for 2026 are comprehensive and aimed at rebuilding city capacity and modernizing city programs, services, and policies. They are categorized as follows:

Top-Line Capital & Tax Priorities

1. **Cumberland Pool Rebuild:** Pursuing state capital budget and federal funding. Commence the planning process for a complete replacement of the aging Cumberland pool and facility.
2. **GROW Tax Savings Plan:** This program has not been updated since it was first established in 2018. With recent exorbitant property tax increases for current residents and our current tax abatement structure for new construction, I want to see how we can provide additional relief to those current residents who are investing in improving the city's aging housing stock and intend to remain in their owner-occupied properties.

Community Engagement Framework

1. Launch Community Engagement Taskforce (see separate document)
2. Inventory community groups with prior relationships with the City to determine future partnership opportunities and relationships. Draft MOUs to set out these relationships for the coming year
3. Convene listening sessions in each neighborhood to hear resident priorities (see Council Rules, Procedures, and Practices section below)
4. Reengage with the chair of the Racial Justice Taskforce to implement Racial Justice Taskforce recommendations.
5. Increase Mayor/Council salaries to align with similar municipalities and facilitate information sessions to create greater understanding of opportunities to serve on City boards and commissions and what to consider about running for local office.
6. Improve and update Council vacancy application to include a job description, eligibility information, what may be considered in the evaluation of candidates, and set a standard process for council applicant interviews that is made public ahead of any council vacancy. (See recent Heights Observer articles for additional suggestions.)
7. Strengthen cooperation with community organizations, special improvement districts, and civic stakeholders to elevate awareness of city programs, capture feedback, and collaboratively identify additional community-driven priorities.

Public Works Modernization

1. Assess and address staffing and resourcing issues in Public Works and respond with legislation for purchasing/contracts as appropriate
2. Review snow removal, leaf and bulk pickup policies against peer municipalities, evaluate new or different capital investments to improve service delivery
3. Support a five-year capital plan for streets and services
4. Review sewer consent decree to assess progress and ensure sustainable compliance with sewer consent decree obligations

Parks and Recreation Revitalization

1. Partner regionally and with the school board to maximize shared assets (including Millikin Park and Heights High pool) as well as grow and improve youth recreation program opportunities
2. Work to fully restore facilities - assess the second rink at the Community Center and consider immediate action on Cumberland Pool

3. Cain Park - Conduct a financial and operational review of Cain Park, and work with community partners to define improvements, programming opportunities, and necessary legislative and budgetary actions

Code and Enforcement Related Initiatives

1. Expand authority of the Planning Commission to include recommending approval/disapproval of significant changes to Park districts.
2. Review housing code and enforcement for potential policy improvements
3. Oversee and drive zoning code modernization efforts with the city's contracted consultant and the city's Planning Department with an aim to complete the zoning code revisions by the end of 2026. (ADUs, signage, and more)
4. Update and modernize Landmark Commission authorizing ordinance following year-long review that concluded in 2024.
5. Modernize notice requirements to ensure inclusion of digital assets and expand notice radius for board and commission cases to ensure broad awareness
6. Make smokeshops and cannabis dispensaries conditionally permitted in commercial districts requiring review and approval by the Planning Commission to operate
7. Universal Code Review and Modernization - Undertake a comprehensive review of out-of-date ordinances and regulatory frameworks to ensure our legal structure meets current and future needs with an aim to complete this by the end of 2026.

Economic Development and Business Activation

1. Severance - Identify a path forward and implement.
2. Support and facilitate the continued success of the NABA and Taylor Road merchants' associations
3. Support initiatives to attract new businesses to our commercial districts generally
4. Explore commercial vacancy incentive/tax programs
5. Provide Council's legislative and budgetary support for major development projects.
6. Inventory city-owned land (residential and commercial) under consideration for development and produce a map that is available to the public on our website delineating what land is available or under consideration

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy

The state of Ohio now requires municipalities to have a cybersecurity program in place. This was appropriately passed by the Council in December. However, I'd like to continue to work with the Director of IT to expand and deepen our cybersecurity and data privacy protections for the city to ensure that we are protecting personal information appropriately and securing our city to the extent possible from cybercriminals.

Proposed Rules, Procedures, and Practices: To improve our collective efficacy, I recommend the Council adopt the following:

- Weekly updates from Council leadership to Council following their Leadership Meeting with the Mayor. This is not for discussion among Council, but to keep Council informed as to what is being discussed with the Administration.

- Work with the law department to create a pathway to Council listening sessions or townhalls that allow for informal resident/Council interaction in accordance with Open Meetings Act requirements.
- Work with Mayor Petras to have the law department confirm receipt of legislation requests to the Legislation@ClevelandHeights.gov email and agree or suggest an alternate timeline for legislation and then follow through on execution.
- When legislation is being requested, cc or bcc all of Council so we are all looped in. We should use a standard “**Do not reply all. For information purposes only.**” caveat on all emails.
- When questions are being asked of directors by one council member, directors should respond and cc all of Council so we have those responses collectively as shared information.
- If requests are being made of a director, copy the Council chair of the related committee (e.g. Andres Gonzalez/Joe DeWitt-Foy, Collette Clinkscale/Gail Larson)
- Legislation attribution – instead of having legislation “introduced by”, I suggest shifting the language to sponsorship/co-sponsorship to indicate who has taken a leading role on the legislation and who is joining in support.
- Council clerk places all city meetings on Council members calendars (boards, commissions, City events etc.) and directors cc Council on all board and commission agendas for maximum information sharing.

MEMO

To: Cleveland Heights City Council

From: Councilwoman Jessica Cohen

Date: April 13, 2026

Re: Proposal for Community Engagement Taskforce Pilot Program

Overview

I am writing to propose the creation of a one-year **Community Engagement Taskforce Pilot Program** designed to strengthen how we as a City engage residents in policy development and community priorities.

Since the new year, we have heard from residents who want to feel more connected to the decisions that shape our city. Many residents are looking for more consistent, accessible, and meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives. That includes residents who have historically participated in civic processes as well as those who have not always felt represented or included. This taskforce will build on the work of the Racial Justice Taskforce and address how to ensure equitable and meaningful community engagement for all residents.

This proposal is grounded in a forward-looking goal. We have an opportunity to build a more intentional and effective approach to community engagement that reaches more residents, reflects a wider range of experiences, and better informs our decision making as a Council.

This pilot is designed not simply to study engagement, but to actively test and implement new approaches during the next year so we can learn what works best for Cleveland Heights.

Purpose of the Pilot

The Community Engagement Taskforce will serve as a resident advisory group that also functions as a civic engagement lab. During the pilot year, the group will both gather input and test practical strategies for engaging residents in real city decisions.

The goal is to move beyond one time feedback and toward a more consistent, structured, and measurable approach to community participation – growing the breadth and depth of resident feedback to drive more informed decision-making and increase engaged representation.

Proposed Structure

- 12 to 15 residents reflecting the geographic and demographic diversity of Cleveland Heights
- 2/3 Council appointments following an open application process
- 1/3 selected by appointed taskforce members
- One year term for pilot phase (option to extend if requested by the taskforce)
- Staff support for coordination and communications
- Consider a facilitator/consultant for the group

Core Pilot Programs and Activities

During the pilot year, I propose the Taskforce focus on the following initiatives:

1. Community Listening and Learning Sessions

The Taskforce could host structured listening and learning sessions tied to specific policy issues that are expected to come before Council and/or municipal government topics of interest. Listening sessions on policy issues could be done in partnership with local groups and community partners.

Potential topics may include:

- Economic development
- Infrastructure and traffic safety
- Parks and public spaces
- Municipal Government 101
- City Boards and Commissions
- The Legislative Process

For each session, the Taskforce will:

- Facilitate community discussion
- Collect and synthesize feedback
- Provide a written summary to Council

This ensures that engagement is directly connected to real policy outcomes and that residents have opportunities to learn more about how their local government works.

2. Community Impact Review Pilot

The Taskforce could pilot a simple review process for selected policy proposals to assess potential community impact (forward looking) or to evaluate what could have been done better to engage community members (backward looking). (e.g. Horseshoe Park Restoration, proposed Delaware Drive development)

This may include questions such as:

- Which neighborhoods are/were most affected
- Whether impacted residents were engaged
- Whether there are unintended impacts on specific populations
- What, if any, limitations there were to providing public available information
- What was done well?

The Taskforce will provide short advisory memos to Council summarizing these considerations and share their findings with the public as a case study with recommendations as to how better engage the community.

3. Engagement Method Testing

The Taskforce could test a range of engagement strategies to determine what works best in our community.

These may include:

- Pop up engagement at community events
- Short digital surveys
- Small group neighborhood conversations
- Direct mail postcards to every resident
- Digital ads
- Social media group engagement
- Block captains/neighborhood ambassadors

The Taskforce will track participation and outcomes and report on which approaches are most effective at reaching a broad cross section of residents.

4. Citywide Civic Participation Survey

The Taskforce could design and distribute a survey to better understand how residents currently engage with city government.

The survey may explore:

- Awareness of city decisions
- Preferred methods of communication
- Barriers to participation
- Priority issues for residents

This will provide baseline data to guide future engagement efforts.

5. Neighborhood Based Forums

The Taskforce could host a series of small forums across different areas of the city to gather localized input. These forums could be structured to bring different communities together (e.g. inviting different neighborhood groups from different parts of the city) or to focus on one neighborhood specifically.

These forums could focus on:

- Neighborhood specific concerns
- Infrastructure and quality of life issues
- Opportunities for improvement
- Communications barriers

Summaries from each forum will be shared with Council to ensure that neighborhood level perspectives are considered.

6. Community Idea Pipeline

The Taskforce could establish a simple process for residents to submit ideas for improving the city. Distinct from the Mayor's Action Center, this would be for ideas and policy suggestions.

Examples may include:

- Traffic calming measures
- Park improvements
- Community programming
- Service enhancements

The Taskforce will review submissions and elevate viable ideas for Council consideration.

7. Communication and Accessibility Review

The Taskforce could assess how the City communicates with residents about its work and proposed legislation and identify opportunities for improvement.

This may include:

- Clear summaries of legislation
- Improved use of digital platforms
- Expanded outreach through community partners
- Accessibility and language considerations

The Taskforce may also test different communication formats and provide recommendations.

8. State of Civic Engagement Report

At the conclusion of the pilot year, the Taskforce will produce a comprehensive report that includes:

- Findings from engagement efforts
- Data on participation and outreach
- Key themes identified by residents
- Recommendations for improving community engagement
- Guidance on whether to continue or expand the Taskforce

This report will provide a clear foundation for future Council action.

Proposed Timeline

May 2026

- Council discussion and feedback
- Finalize structure and application process

June 2026

- Public announcement and call for applications

July 2026

- Review applications and appoint members

August 2026

- First Taskforce meeting and orientation

September to December 2026

- Launch listening sessions
- Conduct survey
- Begin engagement pilots

January to April 2027

- Continue engagement activities
- Conduct community impact reviews
- Provide periodic updates to Council

May 2027

- Present final report and recommendations

Closing

This proposal is intended to strengthen how we connect with residents and how we incorporate their perspectives into our work. A one-year pilot allows us to test new approaches, learn from experience, and make thoughtful decisions about how to build a more inclusive and effective engagement model going forward.

See the attached appendices for suggested application qualifications/selection criteria, a draft application form, and a draft application evaluation rubric.

I welcome your feedback and look forward to discussing this proposal together.

Appendix A - Applicant Qualifications and Selection Criteria

To ensure the Community Engagement Taskforce is effective, credible, and reflective of Cleveland Heights, Council should prioritize applicants who bring a mix of lived experience, community connection, and a demonstrated interest in civic participation.

Core Qualifications

Applicants should:

- Be a resident of Cleveland Heights
- Demonstrate a commitment to improving the community and strengthening civic engagement
- Be willing to actively participate in meetings, community events, and outreach efforts during the one-year pilot
- Be able to work collaboratively with individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives
- Be open to listening, learning, and engaging in respectful dialogue

Desired Characteristics

In selecting members, Council should seek individuals who collectively reflect the full diversity of Cleveland Heights and bring a range of perspectives, including:

1. Diverse Lived Experiences

- Residents from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds
- Renters and homeowners
- Residents from different neighborhoods across the city
- Individuals with varying levels of prior civic engagement, including those who have not traditionally participated in City processes

2. Strong Community Connections

- Individuals who are connected to or engaged with specific communities, networks, or neighborhoods
- Residents who are trusted voices within their communities
- Individuals who can both bring perspectives forward and share information back with others

3. Willingness to Engage Beyond Meetings

- Applicants who are willing to attend or help facilitate community conversations
- Individuals comfortable engaging residents in informal settings such as neighborhood events, schools, libraries, or local organizations

- A demonstrated interest in reaching residents who do not typically attend Council or City meetings

4. Constructive and Solutions-Oriented Mindset

- Individuals who can approach challenges thoughtfully and work toward practical solutions
- Willingness to consider multiple perspectives, even when there is disagreement
- Ability to translate community feedback into actionable ideas

5. Relevant Skills and Experience

The Taskforce will benefit from a mix of skills, including:

- Community organizing or outreach
- Communications or public engagement
- Data collection or survey design
- Facilitation or group moderation
- Experience in education, nonprofit work, business, or public service

Importantly, professional experience is not required. Lived experience and community perspective are equally valuable.

Composition Considerations

When selecting members, Council should aim to ensure:

- Representation from multiple neighborhoods across Cleveland Heights
- Racial and ethnic diversity that reflects the community
- Inclusion of residents from a range of income levels
- A mix of ages and life stages
- Participation from individuals who are not already serving on City boards or commissions

Additional Considerations

To maintain credibility and effectiveness:

- Preference should be given to applicants who demonstrate a genuine interest in engaging with others, not solely advancing a single issue or agenda
- Members should be willing to serve as bridges between the City and the community, helping to both gather input and share information
- The group should include individuals who are comfortable engaging across lines of difference and building trust

Appendix B – Draft Application

Resident Application Form

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Cleveland Heights Community Engagement Taskforce. This one-year pilot program will bring residents together to help shape how the City engages the community in decision-making.

We welcome applications from residents of all backgrounds and experiences. No prior government or board experience is required.

Basic Information

- Name:
- Address (must be a Cleveland Heights resident):
- Email:
- Phone:

1. Why are you interested in serving on the Community Engagement Taskforce?

(Please share what motivates you to apply and what you hope this group can accomplish.)

2. Tell us about your connection to the Cleveland Heights community.

(For example, neighborhoods, organizations, schools, faith communities, or other groups you are part of.)

3. What perspectives or experiences would you bring to this group?

(This could include personal, professional, or community experiences that shape how you see the city and its needs.)

4. In your view, what makes it difficult for some residents to participate in City decision-making?

(What ideas do you have to address these barriers?)

5. This Taskforce will involve engaging with residents in different ways, such as attending community events, helping facilitate conversations, or gathering feedback. How comfortable are you with this type of outreach?

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Not sure yet

(Please explain.)

6. The Taskforce will bring together residents with different perspectives. How do you approach conversations when you disagree with others?

7. Are you currently serving on any City boards, commissions, or committees?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list:

8. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your interest in this role?

Optional Demographic Information

(This information is voluntary and will only be used to help ensure the Taskforce reflects the diversity of Cleveland Heights.)

- Race/ethnicity:
- Age range:
- Rent or own your home:
- Neighborhood (if different from address listed above):

Commitment

Members will be expected to:

- Attend regular meetings (approximately 1 per month)
- Participate in community engagement activities
- Contribute to group discussions and recommendations

Appendix C – Selection Rubric

This rubric is intended to guide Council in evaluating applicants in a consistent, equitable, and transparent manner. The goal is to select a group that reflects the diversity of Cleveland Heights and is well-positioned to engage residents and contribute constructively to the Taskforce’s work.

Each application will be evaluated across the criteria below using a **1–5 scale**, with 5 representing the strongest alignment.

Scoring Scale

- **5 – Exceptional:** Strong, clear, and compelling evidence of this quality
- **4 – Strong:** Solid evidence with meaningful examples
- **3 – Moderate:** Some evidence, but limited depth or specificity
- **2 – Limited:** Minimal evidence
- **1 – Not Demonstrated:** Little or no evidence provided

Evaluation Criteria

1. Commitment to Community Engagement (Weight: High)

What to look for:

- Genuine interest in improving civic participation
- Thoughtful response to why they want to serve
- Alignment with the purpose of the Taskforce

Key question(s):

Why are you interested in serving?

2. Community Connection and Reach (Weight: High)

What to look for:

- Strong ties to neighborhoods, organizations, or community groups
- Ability to both gather input from others and share information back
- Trusted or engaged presence in the community

Key question(s):

Tell us about your connection to the community.

3. Lived Experience and Perspective (Weight: High)

What to look for:

- Unique or underrepresented perspectives

- Insight into the experiences of different groups within the city
- A mix of backgrounds that, collectively, reflect the diversity of Cleveland Heights

Key question(s):

What perspectives or experiences would you bring?

4. Understanding of Barriers to Participation (Weight: Medium)

What to look for:

- Awareness of why residents may not engage with City processes
- Thoughtful or practical ideas for improving participation
- Ability to think beyond personal experience

Key question(s):

What makes it difficult for some residents to participate?

5. Willingness to Engage and Do Outreach (Weight: Medium)

What to look for:

- Comfort interacting with a range of residents
- Willingness to participate in events, forums, or outreach activities
- Openness to engaging beyond formal meetings

Key question(s):

Comfort with outreach and engagement

6. Collaboration and Respectful Dialogue (Weight: High)

What to look for:

- Ability to work with people who have different perspectives
- Openness to listening and learning
- Constructive approach to disagreement

Key question(s):

How do you approach conversations when you disagree?

7. Skills and Contributions (Weight: Low to Medium)

What to look for:

- Relevant skills such as facilitation, communication, organizing, or analysis
- Ability to contribute to group discussions and outputs

Note:

This criterion should not outweigh lived experience or community perspective.

Composition Review (Final Step – Not Scored Individually)

After initial scoring, Council should review the applicant pool as a whole to ensure the final group reflects:

- Geographic diversity across Cleveland Heights
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- A mix of renters and homeowners
- A range of income levels and life experiences
- Both civically engaged residents and those newer to engagement

Additional Guidance

- Avoid over-weighting polished or highly professional applications
- Value authenticity, lived experience, and community connection
- Be mindful that some applicants may have strong perspectives but less formal experience
- Prioritize applicants who demonstrate a willingness to engage constructively and represent more than just their own viewpoint

Jim Posch – Workshop Responses

CH Council Role:

We are elected individuals representing the Legislative, Oversight and Best Interests of our City and Citizens. This work requires constructive collaboration with our Executive branch for goal setting and information sharing.

What would Jim Posch like to accomplish today?

Collaborate with my Council peers to determine our shared goals.

Agreement on how we'll accomplish these goals. (secondary future meeting?)

Agreement on how we'll measure the success of getting our goals accomplished.

(secondary future meeting?)

Jim's Important Action Items (goals)

1. Shift to an Expectation based city culture
2. Develop a strong bench of quality Future Leaders
3. Never Again let what happened during the prior mayor happen again
4. Build upon our "All are Welcome" brand
5. Recognize the importance of Beautification
6. Improve Safety (roads, speed, deer and guns)
7. Recognize our Park System
8. Improve Financial Strength (budgeting, forecasting and bond/credit rating)
9. Increase the Valuations of our Housing Stock (expectation and enforcement)
10. Evaluate our Youth and Senior Programming
11. Evaluate our Economic Development

Transactional Items to Support our Goals

City leadership collaboration to embrace a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) organized by either Council Committee or Department. Start small with the expectation the list will grow over time.

Adjust our Council committees to a hybrid of voting council members, lay citizens and senior staff. The committees will be staffed at the direction of the administration. There will be regular agenda format including such things as a KPIs presentation/discussion. This is a big change; I would suggest a 6-month pilot focused on 2-3 just committees. We would jointly reevaluate this with City Leadership. Adding lay citizens (in an auditing role) can increase the number of future leaders and gives them the needed expertise to be qualified in a leadership role. This new structure closely connects the legislative and administrative bodies. It also gives some of our committees a more distinctive 'purpose'.

When we consider legislation, discuss/highlight how each piece supports our shared goals.

Cleveland Heights means a lot of different things to a lot of different people (welcoming, historic, fair, educated, activism, green urban..). I think we need to leverage these values as our 'brand'. With a declining population we need to attract new residents in a competitive marketplace. Greater density is a requirement for strong vibrant communities.

We already have a LOT of parkland, but we seem to ignore Shaker Lakes as OUR park too (after all - we are investing \$3M in Horseshoe and likely \$\$\$ into Lower Lake). I don't think our community appreciates the largeness of our existing park system. We get a lot of community push back when economic development opportunities are being discussed, we always hear we need more parks!

I recognize the City is making improvements in our Finance Department. But we need a culture shift city wide so everyone appreciates the importance of budgeting and forecasting. Budget changes mid-year are problematic.

We need to recognize that our housing stock is our city's largest asset. If it depreciates, the value of our city depreciates along with it.

Larson Workshop Responses

What are the formal roles for a Council Person?

- Initiate and/or co-sponsor legislation;
- Participate in Committee meetings as a Chair, Vice Chair or Member of a standing Council Committee;
- Serve as liaison to citizen committees affiliated with the Committee the Council member chairs;
- Prepare and Participate in the City's Annual Budget including attendance at Annual Departmental Budget Hearings;
- Represent Council at outside organizations as assigned by the Council President. IE: Serve as Board Member for Doan Brook Watershed Partnership.

What separates us from the other 2 branches of government?

- We are the legislative branch, responsible for approving legislation that comes before us from the Executive branch or from Council.
- We are responsible for holding the Executive Branch accountable for following the annual budget that Council approves.
- All 7 members are elected or appointed officials.

Council members share a 1-2 sentence vision for CH that reflects the goals that drive your priorities for CH.

- Council is a group of 7 elected individuals who come together in public meetings to make decisions that are based on our best analyses of the issues that come before us. These decisions should be made for the benefit of all residents of Cleveland Heights and should be based on facts and data.

List the priorities of this Administration as you see them.

- Provide dependable and equitable services that residents expect from their City's taxpayers.
- Communicate with Staff, Council and the residents often and as transparently as possible to keep everyone informed.
- Prepare and maintain a fiscally responsible Budget that reflects the needs of the residents that is delivered in collaboration with City Council.

Legislative Goals:

- The Law Department is currently vetting Complete and Green Streets Revised Legislation. This should come back to Council for a vote.
- Prepare legislation to place Rank Choice Voting on the November, 2026 ballot.

- Review the Short-Term Rental legislation that was started in the Housing and Building Committee so it is ready for Council's consideration if the Committee moves it forward.
- Strengthen the Penalty aspect of Rental Housing Inspections utilizing Cleveland's Residents First as a possible model so landlords cannot avoid repairing their properties.
- A Deer management program in Cleveland Heights based on the data that has been collected and the USDA deer inventory that the Public Safety and Health Committee recommended.
- Legislation from the Mayor authorizing the disbursement of grant funds to demolish the Hillside Dairy on Warrensville Center Road.
- Continue to advocate for legislation that provides City assistance with sidewalk repair when City tree lawn trees cause the hazard.
- Continue to advocate for legislation that authorizes purchase of equipment and a subsequent program for snow removal from streets surrounding schools, churches, synagogues and other places of worship.

What rules/procedures/practices would you like to see council follow?

- Adoption of rules that include: Professional Conduct including Respect and Civility; Respect for and appropriate response to Public Input in meetings and on social media; Appropriate Council Comments; Ethical Standards; Conflict of Interest; Compliance with Legislative Processes; Communication and Accessibility; Responsible Use of Resources and Administration's Staff time; Collaboration and Teamwork; Continued Professional Development; Rules regarding Campaigning during Council meetings; Adherence to Council Procedures and subsequent consequences if not followed; Attendance Requirements.
- Review the Council vacancy application process. It should include a revised application and a request for assistance from HR, especially requesting background checks.
- Question for my colleagues: Is the current schedule of Council and Committee meetings sustainable as this is supposed to be a part-time job?
- Follow Ohio Open Meetings Act. To accomplish this, Council needs a course on the OMA from a professional recommended by the Law Department.

NLC 2026 RESOLUTION TO LEAD WITH CIVILITY, DIGNITY AND RESPECT

From the NLC Leadership Conference March 2026

Whereas, the National League of Cities, founded in 1924, is the nation's oldest organization representing 19,000 cities, towns and villages across the United States.

Whereas, the Board of Directors of the National League of Cities is comprised of members elected from across the United States to serve one or two year terms.

Whereas, the Board of Directors of the National League of Cities stands united to lead with civility, dignity and respect to meet the needs of all residents across America.

Whereas Local governments across the United States are the most trusted level of government-67 percent of residents trust them to handle local problems and 62 percent feel their local elected officials represent them or their community's interest very and somewhat well.

Whereas, Local governments create innovative solutions and economically thriving and resilient communities by delivering services effectively and efficiently every day.

Whereas, the 19,000 locally elected city town and village leaders interact daily with their residents on main streets, in schools, and throughout their communities, actively listening, discussing key issues and solving issues.

Whereas, We are committed to honoring the dignity of every resident in every neighborhood and to leading by example in showing that differences need not lead to division when we treat one another with dignity.

WE DO HEREBY RESOLVE THAT

Member cities, towns and villages develop and pass their own civility pledge, committing to promote civility within their governance bodies, and
that

We stand united, leading to reduce polarization and create an environment that values shared goals, increased empathy and genuine dialogue.

Stone Workshop Responses

What are the essential roles for a councilperson? What separates us from the other 2 branches of government?

City Council members:

- Develop and enact the city's legislation, collaborating with the Mayor and Executive Branch and responding to citizens' ideas and concerns to make the best and most balanced decisions for Cleveland Heights
- Support the effectiveness of city government by chairing and serving on City Council committees and collaborating with other members of Council and staff
- Oversee the city's finances by approving budgets, making appropriations, authorizing contracts and sales of city property and approving key staff appointments
- Enhance the voice of citizens by appointing them to the city's boards and commissions and acting as legislative liaisons to the commissions
- Hear and respond to the concerns of and proposals from citizens in City Council meetings and by regular presence in community forums and events.

Council is the legislative arm of city government, not very different from a board of directors. We are charged with representing the interests of residents and using legislation to safeguard and improve their rights, property, and way of life. For many of us can-do people, we have to realize it's not our job to implement that legislation – which falls to the Executive Branch of the mayor and city staff. We participate in that implementation by making appropriations and overseeing the city's budget and financial results. Our courts interpret, limit and carry out our laws as they come to affect – and protect – our residents.

Council members will share a 1-2 sentence vision for CH that reflects the goals that drive your priorities for CH.

- Vision for Cleveland Heights as chair of the Housing and Building Committee:
 - Cleveland Heights is a thriving, diverse community whose housing honors its historical character while providing an array of housing options to promote home ownership, stable rentals, population growth and an expanding tax base. City policies exemplify justice and equity to strengthen our neighborhoods so that safe, well-maintained and accessible housing is a reality for all.

List the priorities of this administration as you see them.

Internal:

- **Restore the trustworthiness and effectiveness of city services** to our residents by fostering a culture of transparency, efficiency and high standards.
- Improve our financial management and reporting to **secure a credit-worthy bond rating**
- Create a **five-year capital plan** that recognizes the challenges of the end of ARPA funding
- **Build a team of city executives** that improve the quality and timeliness of work.
- **Evaluate, update, and strengthen city codes**

External:

- Make the best possible **decision about the future of Severance Center** that ensures the quality and stability of its future development and benefits the city through tax revenues. Right now this includes acting as the City's voice to shape any predevelopment agreement so that key provisions are enacted. For me, those provisions are to ensure that the first steps taken are to **make the property a candidate for developers**, including front-loading demolition and concluding a reasonable zoning agreement. I also believe that the agreement should shorten the timeline for the project's completion.
- **Redevelop Cumberland Pool** and plan for the future of our parks
- Strengthen our neighborhoods through continued support of **infill housing development** and assessment of policies (ADU, STR) that offer options without devaluing properties
- Collaborate with Shaker Heights government to make the best possible decision about **the future of Shaker Lakes, especially Lower Lake**. Devise a process for the continuous and accurate flow of information to residents that provides opportunities for feedback and participation.

Prepare your legislative goals to present to your colleagues.

- 1) The most important action the Housing and Building Committee will undertake in the coming year will be the **analysis, updating and improvement of the Housing and Building Code**, and the alignment of that code with the also-evolving Zoning Code. This will include:
 - a) A consultant-led study to identify problem areas of the code, investigate effective strategies from other cities, and suggest improvements that might:

- Support the maintenance of our rental housing stock by **toughening our penalties for vacant and abandoned properties** and absent landlords and **empowering our inspectors and the courts** to ensure those standards are carried out. Cleveland's Residents First is an inspiration.
 - Encourage the **"reforesting" of housing density** by assessing current building codes to encourage building on vacant lots. Investigate and further evaluate ADUs.
 - Evaluate the code to ensure **equity in housing policies** across our neighborhoods.
 - **Align building and housing codes with proposed changes in the zoning code.**
- b) Staff-led community engagement to interpret and adjust the developing new codes
- c) Community education about the benefits of this process and code revisions.
- 2) As the Housing and Building Code is revised, the Committee can also act as a sounding board and evaluator of steps taken to **improve the city's inspection services** to be compliant with the new code.
- 3) The committee can also partner with the administration in the goal of **making housing services more transparent, accessible and understandable to residents**. Staff is already planning on revamping the online portal for housing complaints. The committee can also assess current policies such as the **CRA standards** and propose ways to make the availability of tax rebates more understandable to citizens.
- 4) **Developing Short Term Rental legislation** is a two-year-old initiative that should be completed. The draft legislation should be assessed in light of pending state statutes and a Cleveland Heights-appropriate measure adopted that provides for STRs that contribute to rather than detract from neighborhoods. This includes partnering with Airbnb and strengthening nuisance statutes and related penalties that keep bad actors at bay. The city should assess the cost/benefit of charging excise tax now and in the future, when there are more rental units and possibly ADUs that become STR candidates. A community engagement piece of this process is essential.
- 5) While this is a somewhat unformed goal, I also hope the Committee can work with staff **to devise programs that help keep seniors in their homes and avoid vacancies** caused by undisposed home estate assets and more preventable, foreclosure due to tax delinquencies. In the recent report from the Community Housing Development Forum, this was described as the coming storm in home vacancies.

What rules/procedures/practices would you like to see council follow?

We are fortunate to have a collaborative, hard-working Council – so much so that we all attend one another’s meetings just to stay informed! It is also fortunate that previous policies that forbade Council from interacting directly with staff have been discontinued. I would like to see policies that support this new culture of collaboration. These might be:

- Creating a roadmap for aligning the work of committees and resulting legislation. It’s exciting to me that the housing and zoning code studies are happening simultaneously so a cohesive set of aligned policies can be created. Can we create a mechanism – a Slack channel? – where we have a continuous thread of conversation about that collaboration?
- Formalize the assignment of staff to committees and create policies for check-in conversations and planning.

This same spirit of openness could be extended to Council communications with constituents. The idea of town halls or regular Council chats is one we should think about to promote more direct-to-constituent conversations which now don’t happen in Council Chambers

Dewitt-Foy Workshop Responses

What are the formal roles for a councilperson?

I understand the role of council to be the legislative authority for the city, specifically including budgetary authority, and to provide appropriate oversight of the administration and its functions. Legislative and budgetary decisions are made to set the strategic priorities for the city, to be executed by the Mayor and administrative staff. Oversight is accomplished by ensuring city activities are in accordance with the legislative and budgetary priorities set by Council.

Vision for Cleveland Heights

I believe Cleveland Heights can be the most family-friendly city in Ohio, where families of all shapes and sizes are welcomed and thrive. Through smart investments in health, safety and community assets, we can build community and opportunity for all.

Priorities of this administration

I understand this administration to be chiefly concerned with building back trust in local government in Cleveland Heights, specifically through responsible stewardship of public dollars, targeted investments in city assets, improved quality of services for all residents, and responsible public safety approaches that keep all residents safe.

Legislative Priorities

Walkability & Pedestrian Safety

- Reinstatement of Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (or similar) to create a process for traffic calming requests, assessment and deployment
- Begin implementation of the Active Transportation Plan, specifically phase 1 of the neighborhood greenways network
- Create a Vision Zero Task Force to review progress towards our Vision Zero goals and direct funding towards high-impact safety improvements

Zoning & Housing

- Increased flexibility of zoning code to promote mixed-use walkable neighborhoods in more areas of the city
- Allow for a broader diversity of housing types to be built, that fit the needs of broad range of household types

Environmental Sustainability

- Create an Urban Forestry Master Plan to guide investments and actions

Parks & Recreation

- Cumberland Pool
- Doan Brook
- Increase funding and participation for youth recreation, amenities and programs

What rules/procedures/practices would you like to see council follow?

I think we are off to a strong start collaborating and showing an ability to have respectful, productive dialogue, even when the topic is contentious or when we differ, and would very much like for this to continue to be a priority. It would be helpful to establish working norms that better facilitate communication between meetings, so that necessary work may continue. We may need to reevaluate our committee structure for this to be workable. It would be very helpful for committee packets to be available further in advance of meetings, to provide more ability for council to discuss and seek clarity when needed. Additional time during COTW could also help as this would allow for more extended discussions during which always seem to be packed agendas.