

Susan's Suggestions For the Elections – Tuesday November 5th 2019

As always, our voice is only as loud as our vote. With our growing numbers and the emergence of J-Vote as a force advocating for issues of value to our neighborhood, your vote and our voice is more vital than ever. This election encompasses important local issues, and there are many initiatives under consideration that can affect us: from safety to trash pickup, to Taylor Rd. and economic development.

I am incorporating J-Vote recommendations along with mine. Where we differ, you can't go wrong choosing either recommended option. Please make sure to see the expanded edition for explanations.

City of Cleveland Heights Council 4 year term – no more than 3 of 5

J-Vote and Susan Endorse: **Melody Joy Hart and Kahlil Seren**

J-Vote also Endorsed: **Carol Roe.**

City of Cleveland Heights Council unexpired 2-year term- choose 1

Susan's Suggestions: **Davida Russell**

CHUH Board of Education – no recommendation

Issue 3 – Tri- C Tax Increase – Vote **NO**

Issue 6 – County Charter Amendment – Regarding how the Sheriff's office is chosen and its oversight. Vote **NO**

Issue 26- Cleveland Heights – Charter Amendment to elect our own full time Mayor
with executive power replacing the City Manager while maintaining professional management through a City Administrator who answers directly to the Mayor
– Vote YES!!!! J-Vote Endorsed

Please - See next page for Expanded Edition notes-

– However you vote, please make sure that our voice is heard through your vote-

Expanded Edition:

Issue 26 – Cleveland Heights – Elected Mayor Charter Amendment

Background: Like many in Cleveland Heights, I have observed Cleveland Heights falling behind our neighboring cities in the county in economic development (see Severance, see vacancies for businesses and empty homes) nearly all of which do have the leadership of a directly elected mayor. Our water bills rising so sharply can be attributed to the lack of leadership in dealing with aging infrastructure, and there are other areas on the horizon that will need to be dealt with. With cuts in funding, cities are increasingly competing with each other to bring home state funds. Meanwhile, Shaker Heights, the city that Issue 26 is based on, took home everything it asked for because it had both a Mayor to lead and drive things and a City Administrator running the departments who could answer the necessary questions in detail.

Currently we have a city manager form of government in which we elect seven council members who run the city by consensus. Council hires a city manager as an executive to run the departments. Essentially, we have only one branch of government, the legislative one, with an executive answerable to the entire council as a whole. This creates a systemic dynamic to not rock the boat. And so, initiatives drag on and on, and many important but polarizing issues are not addressed at all or only when our backs are against the wall which is less than optimal.

Issue 26 would create a co-equal executive branch with a full time, directly elected Mayor. This would force the mayoral candidates to come before the people and bring a vision for the city allowing the citizens to select and give a mandate to the mayoral candidate whose vision is most aligned with theirs, and decide whether an incumbent mayor is doing the job of the people. Issue 26 also creates the office of City Administrator who would have the same qualifications as our current City Manager position, but would instead be answerable to the Mayor. In Shaker Heights, one Administrator may serve under several successive Mayors. Having both positions is the best of both worlds - providing greater leadership, vision, and accountability, with the management skills of urban development.

By creating a second branch of government it creates checks and balances currently lacking, but as with all forms of government will always require public input and scrutiny - vigilance on the part of the people is always needed.

I became convinced of the advantage of an Elected Mayor some time ago, and therefore I became a member of CEM – the Citizens for an Elected Mayor – to help get the issue on the ballot and advocate for it. Having a full-time mayor at City Hall to advocate for the city is the best way to move forward with economic development and in the current competitive environment in this region where all our neighbors have a mayor where the buck stops. It is a more transparent and democratic form of government than the current one that will bring more accountability to our city. While this change alone will not fix our city, it will open the door to improvements that currently are happening too slowly if at all in comparison to our neighboring municipalities. This change is intended to help stop us from falling further behind and open the door to a better future.

On the other side, there is a group advocating against this issue. They correctly point out that there will need to be adjustments if this issue passes, and it may actually slow things down for a while. This is a possibility, but I don't believe that is a reason not to make the change.

They also claim that the entire issue has been orchestrated in order to elect a particular mayor. However, having been involved in CEM since the beginning, I can verify that the members are truly looking out for what they believe is best for the city, and further, we have all committed not to run for mayor in the first election (to my husband's great relief!) nor to endorse, as a group, any candidate. This is not a power play on anyone's behalf. Such accusations are untrue. CEM is a total grass roots effort that is locally funded.

They cite a study, which you are welcome to review yourselves, which seems to claim that there is a higher chance for corruption with a mayor than a manager. However, that study includes cities like Chicago that do not apply to our demographic. Although not mentioned, the same study also concludes that the likelihood of corruption does not change with a change in form of government. Meanwhile, please see the CEM website and the Yale study and other supporting articles. Further, one should be careful when lobbyists from outside a jurisdiction donate heavily to a campaign.

Articles, letters and histories supporting this initiative can be found in the Heights Observer going back over several months. Issue 26 is supported by our community and is endorsed by J-Vote, Rabbi Sruly Wolf, Benyamin Cweiber, Ruti Wolf and more. It has also been endorsed by the Plain Dealer. That interview is available in its entirety on the Citizens for an Elected Mayor website, along with supporting studies and endorsements.

Vote YES! on Issue 26

As a member of Citizens for an Elected Mayor, we all agreed not to endorse any candidate for council that has not endorsed Issue 26. However, my responsibility to the community is to make sure that I inform you about what is good for our community in general and not what is limited to any single issue. With that, I have explained below any seeming contradictions in our endorsements.

City of Cleveland Heights Council 4 year term – no more than 3 of 5

Melody Hart – Has been actively participating in government and has a good relationship with members of our community. She brings a solid economic background that would make a good addition to council. She endorses an Elected Mayor

Kahlil Seren and **Carol Roe** are incumbents who have supported our community on issues that we care about such as maintaining funding for Geshet and Yom Tov trash pickup. Seren supports an Elected Mayor; Roe does not. Both have a willingness to listen and understand our neighborhood and have been allies of Councilman Stein on issues our community values.

All three candidates understand our community's point of view and are generally supportive of issues such as working with us as the city develops a traffic and safety plan for Taylor Rd. and, as the city moves forward in the next year with a new trash pickup plan, and development of lands adjacent to our community such as Millikin and Severance.

I do want to give a shout out to Anthony Maddox who is new to the political picture and will be someone to watch in the future. He has good ideas and supports the people in ways that show promise.

And because you asked: Jason Stein is not on the ballot because his four-year term is not up for another two years. Please thank him for his service and encourage him to run again in 2021.

Susan's Suggestions: Melody Joy Hart and Kahlil Seren

J-Vote Endorsed: Melody Joy Hart, Kahlil Seren and Carol Roe

City of Cleveland Heights Council unexpired 2 year term- choose 1

Susan's Suggestions: Davida Russell

J-Vote Endorsed: Craig Cobb

Russell supports electing our own mayor and Cobb does not, but both are excellent candidates and solidly believe in reaching out the community in determining its needs on all the issues above. Russell, in particular has been an ally in working to ensure that the task force on Refuse and Recycling does not recommend unfairly charging large families more for trash pickup and that the costs remain evenly aggregated across the city. Russell has a background in community activism and genuinely believes in fighting for everyone to succeed. She relates to the struggles of large and or economically challenged families with a feeling of real understanding and translates that into tangible outcomes. She has worked in education in the classroom and as a bus driver but also in organizational leadership positions all over the state. Cobb is an Independent - not only politically, but has shown the ability to consider a position from a variety of points of view and vote his conscience. He is a clear speaker, respectful, and a hard worker. He is the more polished of the two and was able to articulate that in a more meaningful way, winning him the J-Vote endorsement with a slight edge.

In this election, I honestly believe that no matter who wins, we don't lose. Both are solid choices. Both have positive views of our neighborhood and its needs. Because Cobb is a very recent appointee, they are both new to this sphere. This is an opportunity for our community to show that we are not monolithic and that our vote is competitive and to be sought after.

CHUH Board of Education – no recommendation – the two candidates are running unchallenged.

Issue 3 – Tri- C Tax Renewal and Increase – The existing levy was approved in 2009 for \$190 per year per \$100k property value. 5 years ago, an additional \$210 per \$100k value was approved, for a total of \$400 per year. This levy renews the \$190, but also adds another \$40 (a significant increase). My rule of thumb is to support tax renewals and not increases unless great need can be demonstrated to make the exception. Since 3 bundles a significant increase along with the renewal, I oppose it. **Vote NO.**

Issue 6 – County Charter Amendment – Regarding how the County Sheriff is chosen and oversight. Like all recent county amendments, this is a rejiggering of how the county works after the big change in the charter. This is aimed at fixing problems in the sheriff's office and jail by removing total control from the county executive and giving more oversight to the council in general. However, the change would mean that a consensus of 8 of the 11 council representatives would be needed to remove him and that is seen by others as too high a bar. A great number of law enforcement organizations and legal experts prefer an amendment to directly elect the sheriff, rather than having the sheriff overseen by the council. Should this fail, that option would be back on the table. **Vote NO.**

Issue 26 – Say YES to an elected Mayor – and bring ten of your friends to do the same.

However you vote, it is important that you do show up and vote.