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Get to Know Your Community Levies

By William Tarter, Jr., Policy/Research Associate & Community Advocacy

Each year, citizens make their voices heard on a variety of issues through the voting process. Some of those issues are addressed by means of tax levies. In this issue of *Common Ground*, we will examine what county issues appear on the ballot in Cuyahoga, as well as how much the levies cost and how the money is allocated. It is our intent that this can serve as a resource for voters, organizations in their educational efforts, and officials in their strategic planning.

Thus far, this year, Cuyahoga County is not scheduled to have any major spending levies on the ballot. In the City of Cleveland, the mayoral seat and all 17 seats in City Council are up for election.

However, 2018 stands in stark contrast to this year, as the levy for three community organizations (one city and two county) expire or are up for renewal. The first is the **Cleveland Public Library** levy. The 5.8 mill levy, last passed in 2013, raises over \$26 million annually.¹ It represents 47 percent of the library budget.² According to the library, all of its operating and capital expenses are supported in part by levy funding, which includes salaries of over 700 employees, system wide programming, and capital expenses for the main campus and 27 branches. For more information:

www.cpl.org/thelibrary/aboutthelibrary/

The two county issues are the **Cuyahoga County Port Authority** and the **Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services (HHS)** levy. The Port Authority levy is among the smallest county tax levies (.13 mills) and costs the average homeowner approximately \$3.45 for every \$100,000 of home value. The levy brings in approximately \$3 million annually,³ which amounts to 27 percent of the total budget for the organization.⁴ The Port of Cleveland uses most levy funds for current and future maritime and environmental infrastructure projects, such as Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve, Irish Town Bend Stabilization efforts, and Flotsom and Jetsom workboat operations. Less than a third of levy funds are spent on Port of Cleveland general operations (which vary from year to year). For more information: www.portofcleveland.com.

The five-year 3.9 mill HHS levy was last passed in 2013 and is set to expire in 2018. It is one of two levies (the 4.8 mill levy was passed in 2016) which fund health and human services; when combined, they bring in \$230 million annually. For more information on the Cuyahoga County HHS levies, please read the April, 2017, edition of [County Budgeting Matters](#).

The **Cuyahoga County Public Library** has a 2.5 mill continuing levy that is administered through property taxes in 47 communities that are served by the library system. The levy was passed in 2008 and brings in \$41.9 million per year. The levy costs a homeowner \$76.56 per \$100,000 in home valuation.⁵ The levy makes up over half of the library's operating budget.⁶ The levy remains in perpetuity and is not subject to a vote. For more information, check out the [Cuyahoga County Library Annual Financial Report](#).

Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) has two alternating 10-year levies, each renewal spaced five years apart. In 2020, a 1.9 mill levy for Tri-C will expire. The levy brings in \$50.7 million a year and costs a homeowner \$58.19 in annual property taxes for every \$100,000 of home value. When combined with the other Tri-C levy, the levies bring in 32 percent of the \$332 million annual budget.⁷ For more information: www.tri-c.edu/about/college-financial-information.html.

Passed in 2013, the **Cleveland Metroparks** passed a 2.7 mill, 10-year levy which expires in 2023. The levy brings in \$74,225,000 annually and costs the average homeowner \$96.25 for every \$100,000 in home value. The Metroparks levy comprises 60 percent of the revenue of the Cleveland Metroparks budget. The Metroparks is comprised of 18 reservations spanning more than 23,000 acres with more than 300 miles of trails, eight golf courses, eight lakefront parks, and the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.⁸ Cleveland Metroparks supports nearly 18 million recreational visits to the Park District each year. An economic driver, Cleveland Metroparks contributes at least \$855 million annually in economic benefits to the community. For more information: [https://clevelandmetroparks.com/getmedia/6a8130a6-](https://clevelandmetroparks.com/getmedia/6a8130a6-37dc-4576-b691-3348547e283b/Cleveland-Metroparks-2015-CAFR.pdf.ashx)

[37dc-4576-b691-3348547e283b/Cleveland-Metroparks-2015-CAFR.pdf.ashx](https://clevelandmetroparks.com/getmedia/6a8130a6-37dc-4576-b691-3348547e283b/Cleveland-Metroparks-2015-CAFR.pdf.ashx)

The **Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC)** levy funds one of the largest public funders for arts and culture in the nation. The levy was last passed in 2016, with over 75 percent approval, the highest approval rate of any county ballot issue in the past 10 years.⁹ The CAC levy, which charges \$.30 per pack on cigarettes, brought in \$14,767,137 in 2016 and expires in 2027. The tax is 100 percent of the overall organization budget. Since 2007, CAC has invested more than \$158 million in more than 300 organizations. For more information: cacgrants.org.

Nearly 60 percent of the **Cuyahoga County Board of Disabilities'** budget comes from a 3.9 mill continuing levy that was passed in 2005.¹⁰ At that time, the levy brought in \$112 million per year. Today, the levy brings in approximately \$105 million per year.¹¹ The levy remains in perpetuity and is not subject to a vote. For more information check out the [2015 Annual Report](#).

As Cuyahoga County moves forward, it will be important that voters learn about the impact of levies on organizations, as well as the impact on the overall community.

¹ http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/10/vote_for_issue_79_the_cleveland.html

² https://cpl.org/2014annual/CAFR_FINAL_063015.pdf

³ <https://digital.case.edu/concern/texts/ksl:ech-ccpa>

⁴ http://www.thepostnewspapers.com/north_royalton/local_news/voters-approve-cleveland-cuyahoga-county-port-authority-tax-levy/article_273a420f-c138-5cc3-9aa5-596134c6f059.html

⁵ <http://www.news-herald.com/article/HR/20080920/NEWS/309209957>

⁶ http://www.cleveland.com/education/index.ssf/2008/09/success_at_the_cuyahoga_county.html

⁷ http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/11/cuyahoga_community_college_tax.html

⁸ <https://clevelandmetroparks.com/about>

⁹ http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2015/12/official_election_results_deta.html

¹⁰ http://www.communitysolutions.com/index.php?option=com_lyften_bloggie&view=entry&year=2016&month=11&day=30&id=49%3Acuyahoga-county-hhsa-committee-features-content-rich-october-and-november-meetings&Itemid=264

¹¹ http://www.cuyahogabdd.org/pdf_BDD/en-US/2431%20Annual%20Final.pdf

Meet the Author: Will Tarter



William Tarter, Jr. (Will) is CCS' Policy Planning Associate & Community Advocacy. Previously, he served as community engagement specialist for OneCommunity, manager of business research and community for the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, and voter education and outreach specialist for the Office of Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner. Among his many community activities, Will is founder and past president of the Cleveland Young Professional Senate, active in Toastmasters International, a fellow in the Legislative Service Commission of the Ohio General Assembly, a member of the City of Cleveland Division of Police Body Worn Camera Policy Committee, a member of the NAACP, and a volunteer for Youth Opportunities Unlimited. Recognized by *Crain's Cleveland Business* "40 Under 40," he was also recognized by *Cleveland Business Connects Magazine* as the "Networking Star of the Year." Will graduated cum laude with a Masters in Public Administration and a Bachelors of Science in Communication degree from Ohio University. Will is married to his college sweetheart, has one child, and is awaiting the arrival of a second.

SAVE THE DATE: October 20, 2017
Annual Celebration of Human Services!
8a-1:30p / Hilton Garden Inn, Cleveland Downtown
McCullough Lecture, \$25K Anisfield-Wolf Memorial Award,
MTV Awards, Public Service Awards

Nominations Open for Annual Awards Deadline: June 30

Nominations are open for two prestigious community awards:



Anisfield-Wolf Memorial Award: A \$25,000 prize to a nonprofit organization for outstanding service.



Most Treasured Volunteer Awards: Honoring people who help people in Northeast Ohio.

Information and forms may be found at www.CommunitySolutions.com. Nominations may be submitted via USPS, email, or online. **All submissions are due by noon on Friday, June 30.**

Awards will be presented during the annual Celebration of Human Services on October 20 at the Hilton Garden Inn-Downtown.

"Last year's event at The Q was great," comments Celebration Committee Chair **Carter Strang**. "This year's event is going to be a whole new ballgame. We're expanding it to be both a celebration and an outstanding educational event for our community."

"Our Celebration luncheon in 2017 will follow a morning of information-packed sessions on timely health and social service topics," explains **John Corlett**, president and executive director. "We're planning four concurrent sessions addressing CCS strategic priority issues, as well as an outstanding opening speaker."

"For those who have been in Northeast Ohio for awhile, the schedule may sound familiar; it's similar to our signature Human Services Institute of the past—in a half-day format. We look forward to seeing old friends and new ones this year."



Nominate an Outstanding Nonprofit Organization for the \$25,000 Anisfield-Wolf Memorial Award!
Deadline for nominations: June 30!



Nominate YOUR Most Treasured Volunteer for an MTV Award!
Deadline for nominations: June 30!
Presentation: October 20

Registration for the 2017 Celebration of Human Services will open in September.

“Too many Ohio seniors choosing between food and medicine”

Op-Ed: John Corlett, May 5, 2017



The State Budget Evolves Quickly!
Follow its progress with
CCS Budget Blogs



Recent Media Notes

- President & Executive Director **John Corlett's** op-ed, [“Too many Ohio seniors choosing between food and medicine,”](#) appeared in *The Plain Dealer* and [cleveland.com](#). (5/5/17)
- Public Policy Fellow **Loren Anthes** was quoted in *The Columbus Dispatch's* [“Obamacare elimination could cost Ohio \\$16-\\$22 billion”](#) and [news5cleveland.com's](#) [“What counts as a pre-existing condition? Northeast Ohioans worry about new health care bill”](#) (5/5/17).
- **John Corlett** was quoted in *Modern HealthCare's*, [“If GOP repeal bill becomes law, most states likely to end their Medicaid expansion”](#) (05/04/17).
- **John Corlett** was quoted in WKSU.org's [“New Study Finds Northern Ohio Cities Have Work to do When it Comes to Economic Inequality.”](#) (5/4/17)
- [“Would Rural Ohio Counties be the Unwitting Victim of Proposed Federal and State Medicaid Changes?”,](#) by **John Corlett**, was quoted in the [Public News Service](#) and [WCSMRadio.com's](#) [“Report: State, Federal Medicaid Proposals Would Hurt Rural Ohioans”](#) (5/4/17), [Perry Tribune's](#) [“Proposed Medicaid funding changes could cost Perry County residents”](#) (5/2/17), [The Akron Beacon Journal's](#) [“Watch out for Statehouse Republicans seeking to wreck the Medicaid expansion”](#) (4/30/17), [The Toledo Blade's](#) [“House Weighs Medicaid Vote”](#) and the [Highland County Press'](#) [“Proposed Medicaid Changes could Cost Highland County Millions.”](#) (4/28/17)

The Council on Older Persons (COOP) welcomed two visitors from Germany, along with their State Department liaison, on May 4 to talk about local work in the field of aging, as well as shared concerns and ideas.

Board, Staff & Volunteer Notes

- Congratulations to **Dr. M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad** on his upcoming retirement from Case Western Reserve University. Terry is a long-time member of the CCS Board of Directors and the Council on Older Persons. He was recently featured in *The Daily's* [“Compassion propelled social work pioneer to peerless career.”](#)
- Our condolences to the family of **Eleanor M. Warner**, long-time member of the Council on Older Persons.
- Congratulations to Associate Director **Emily Campbell** on the birth of her daughter, Sylvia.

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