Partisan politics alive and well in Cuyahoga County

Brancatelli punished for endorsing a Republican judge

Cleveland Ward 12 Councilman Tony Brancatelli, who represents the Slavic Village area and parts of the Old Brooklyn neighborhood, Brooklyn Center, Industrial Valley and Tremont area, has been booted out of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party’s executive committee for endorsing Republican Judge Ron O’Leary in last November’s election.

Brancatelli will also be denied his party’s endorsement that he ran for office, presumably in the 2021 Ward 12 council race, and has been stripped of his position as deputy ward leader for Ward 12.

Does the so-called crime committed in breaking his party’s bylaws merit that kind of reprisal? Is the Democratic leadership of Cuyahoga County afraid of a Republican invasion? Should Brancatelli’s endorsement of a Republican judge go unpunished?

“You should be able to be a Democrat and still be able to vote for the best candidate,” Brancatelli told The Neighborhood News. O’Leary was appointed by Governor John Kasich in April 2017 to fill the vacancy on the city’s housing court, created when Judge Ray Pianka passed away in January 2017. O’Leary was elected to the position the following November when he beat Democrat Mona Scott.

He again ran to keep his seat last November once more against Scott, who ultimately won the election. After Brancatelli’s endorsement of her opponent, Scott filed a formal complaint with the Democratic Party against him and refused to withdraw it, even after she had already won the race.

“Mona never asked for my endorsement, and there was no way of evaluating her credentials since she never filled out any of the mainstream candidate reviews like Judge for Yourself or cleveland.com,” Brancatelli said.

He said he planned on endorsing O’Leary no matter the consequences as he was the best candidate for housing court judge, as his outstanding job performance had shown.

“He really stepped into the shoes of Ray Pianka,” Brancatelli said, a judge much loved in the Slavic Village community for his tough stand on absentee property owners and code violations and advocating for tenants’ rights.

“When I endorsed Judge O’Leary, I was making sure to hold him to his word and to his actions,” Brancatelli said. “I think we need a leader who is going to stand up for us.”

Many Cleveland residents are outraged at what the Democrats did to Brancatelli as evidenced by scores of Facebook postings like that of Michael Banks: “Shame on you, Cuyahoga County Dems and so called leaders in local housing advocacy. Judge O’Leary was the best candidate and you all knew it. Cm. Brancatelli was the only one of you to publicly acknowledge that truth and to return the favor you boot him from leadership. In this you prove that you care more about yourselves than what is best for those you proclaim to serve and are not deserving of the votes you get.”

Even Judge O’Leary has weighed in on Facebook per Cleveland Scene: “Tony and I have worked together on code-enforcement and housing issues for the last 15 years. He has worked tirelessly for his neighborhood and his city as Slavic Village Development Corporation’s director, the County Landbank’s chairman, and as Ward 12’s Councilman.

“He really stepped into the shoes of Ray Pianka,” Brancatelli said, a judge much loved in the Slavic Village community for his tough stand on absentee property owners and code violations and advocating for tenants’ rights.

“O’Leary brought that same kind of caring and compassion to his housing court,” Brancatelli said.

As the councilman from Slavic Village, which had the highest foreclosure rate in the United States 10 years ago, Brancatelli said housing remains one of the most important issues for his residents.

Indy exerts 'home rule' power to exempt retailers from county's plastic bag ban

Independence Council met in regular session on December 10th and passed an ordinance to exempt retailers within the city from the Cuyahoga County ordinance creating a countywide disposable bag ban, with Councilwoman Patricia Wisnieski as the lone dissent.

According to the legislation passed, Cuyahoga County Council did not seek the input of the cities that will be affected by the ordinance, and the bag ban will “place on undue burden on retail businesses, residents and customers of the retail establishments... by banning disposable plastic bags and non-permitted paper bags.”

Independence Council noted in the bill that it was its intention “to employ its home-rule authority in order to regulate collection and recycling of disposable plastic bags.”

The legislation defines “retail establishment” as any convenience store, retail store, shop, service station or restaurant and any other sales outlet occupying 10,000 square feet or more of usable space where a customer can buy goods or food.

A “disposable plastic bag” is defined as a bag made from either non-compostable plastic or compostable plastic provided by a retail establishment to a customer at point of sale, but does not include bags specifically intended for multiple reuse.

According to the Independence legislation, retail establishments in the city must follow certain rules to be allowed to circumvent the county’s plastic bag ban. Retailers must collect, transport and recycle all the disposable plastic bags they collect from customers, except those that are not “sufficiently free of foreign material to enter the recycling stream.”

Whoever violates any provision of the ordinance will be guilty of a minor misdemeanor, and each day’s violation will constitute a separate offense.

Togliatti farewell

With the upcoming swearing in of mayor-elect Gregory Kurtz on Jan. 2, 2020, this was Anthony Togliatti’s last regular council meeting as mayor and in his report to
Bedford officials reflect on 2019, look ahead to new year at last week’s council meeting

By Judith Goldsworth

“It was a good year for the city,” Mayor Stan Koci pronounced at the Bedford Council meeting last week.

Koci said he would go more in depth on Bedford’s continuing progress in his annual State of the City address, to be held early next year, but wanted to give a brief update at the final meeting of this year.

“It has been a much better year, as far as we had more good things happen than bad, and after 10 years of an economy going down, down, down, and we were just fighting every day just to keep the people’s jobs and services to the community, we can now look forward and we’re bouncing up,” Koci said.

He said it’s due to a lot of hard work by the city administration, including City Manager Mike Mallis, Finance Director Frank Gambosi, Law Director John Montello, “and the whole City Hall crew and all of our employees... they just do a great job, day in and day out. I just want to give kudos to all of them.”

In his report to council, Mallis also reported on possible improvements coming for the city, including seeking funding for a project, which if approved, would restore and enhance the historic and aesthetic appearance of the long-time natural attraction that is part of the Cleveland Metroparks system.

He stated that Economic Development Director Jennifer Kuzma had worked on and completed a State Capital Budget Request, which is closely to $1 million dollars, for the Viaduct Connector Project. This project will focus on the city’s historic viaduct in the Tinker’s Creek waterfall area, around Broadway Avenue and Northfield Road.

Mallis said, “A lot of details went into that, and there was a lot of support that we received, not only locally, but we received county support and the Cleveland Metroparks’ support, so we will keep an eye on that request.”

Koci commented that State Senator Kenny Yuko and State Representative Juanita Brent have both been involved with the project in efforts to obtain funding.

“Just as a quick overview,” Mallis said. “The entire project, from Egbert Road, would be building a standard bridge kind of mimicking what used to be there, the historic bridge connecting to downtown Bedford, connecting from downtown Bedford down Willis and tying into the trail.”

He added that total cost of the project was currently estimated at about $1.7 million, “so obviously, any assistance that we can look into and identify grant dollars, we’re going to do so.”

Mallis also stated, “I want to mention that we did formally apply for the CDBG (Cuyahoga County Community Development Block Grant) for $50,000 to televise a quarter of the city’s sewers, and obviously, we’ll utilize that information to determine more large scale repairs that need to be made.

Regarding the purchase of new vehicles for the fire department recently approved by council to replace equipment, Mallis said that Fire Chief Dave Nagy has received information regarding some of the new fleet that is currently being built. “It looks as if the new squad will be delivered sometime in February, and then the engine’s target right now is late April.”

City council has approved numerous pieces of legislation this year to improve and update signage in Bedford, and Mallis also gave an update on that effort.

“We are working on a CDSG (Cuyahoga County Community Development Supplemental Grant) due in the middle of January, and that is to fund the remaining portion of our sign initiative, and that’s going to be completed in 2020,” he said.

Legislative agenda

Council approved an ordinance authorizing a change order with Terrace Construction Co., Inc., for the Tinker’s Creek Commerce Park/Art of Beauty Waterline Replacement Project, in the amount of $12,108.40, due to an unanticipated increase in the scope of the needed work for this project.

Council also passed an ordinance to amend this year’s budget and close the books on 2019.

“We took some major hits with the Health Insurance Fund. We’re going to need a transfer of funds there,” Gambosi said.

He said that money was added to the Firefighters Pension Fund, and the Eagles Club gave a couple of nice donations to the fire and police departments. “We also had a $2,000 grant for the Food Bank, and Dick’s Sports gave us $2,500 for Recreation, and we had a couple of other items, like our water lines, that we had on the agenda tonight that we just passed. We have a budget for that change order and that’s pretty much it. I ask council to pass this so we can finish up the year 2019.”

Council passed legislation for a pay raise for Bedford Municipal Courts Clerk Tom Day, as the state of Ohio mandates a 1.75% raise to clerks of municipal courts, coinciding with judicial pay raises. Day’s annual compensation will be increased from $117,980 (from 2019) to $119,515, effective Jan. 1, 2020, per the ordinance.

The Bedford Municipal Court is a regional court, serving not only the city of Bedford, but also 13 other communities, according to the court’s website.

“Clerks get 85% of the judges’ pay, and the good thing about that is [Cuyahoga County] pays 40% and the other 60% is divided between the 14 communities that utilize the court system. It’s based on usage by those communities, and our percentage is about 15 percent,” Koci explained.

Council moved to approve the Planning Commission’s decision to accept the site plan approval of Richard Kieley, architect of Beachwood, representing Light of Hearts Villa, 283 Union Street, proposing a two-story addition to the existing structure at this location.

Light of Hearts, a co-sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and the Sisters of Charity Health System, is a senior residential living facility located in the former Lumen Cordium High School complex.

Kieley, who was present at last week’s meeting, stated, “Thank you, I appreciate the input. We’re happy to have the approval, and we’re looking forward to construction in the spring.”

Placed on second reading were two ordinances: One to establish rental rules, regulations and fees at the Archbold Willard Park Pavilion at the Ellenwood Recreation Center, and the other to amend an existing ordinance pertaining to “Fees, Deposits and Charges regarding Recreation Centers” in the city. Both will be discussed by council before possible passage at a future meeting.

Announcements

The first Bedford Council meeting of 2020 will be an organizational meeting at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 2, at City Hall, 165 Center Rd.
Give one last gift – the gift of life – this holiday season
Free Red Cross long-sleeved T-shirt for those who come to give Dec. 19-Jan. 5

During this season of giving, the American Red Cross urges eligible donors to give the gift of life to help ensure patients don’t have to worry about the availability of blood this winter. Blood and platelet donations of all types are needed, especially type O.

Holiday travel and severe winter weather often lead to a decline in blood donations. However, a patient’s need for lifesaving treatment doesn’t take a vacation or stop for nasty weather. Blood and platelets are needed every day for those receiving treatment for cancer and leukemia, accident and burn victims and surgical patients, among others.

As a special thank you for being the lifeline for patients this holiday season, those who come out to give blood or platelets with the Red Cross through Jan. 5 will receive a long-sleeved Red Cross T-shirt, while supplies last.

To schedule an appointment to donate, download the free Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities:

Garfield Heights
Dec. 31: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Marymount Hospital, 12300 McCracken Rd.
Jan. 6: 1 to 6 p.m., Garfield Heights Civic Center, 5407 Turney Rd.

Independence
Jan. 7: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Park Center Building 1, 6100 Oak Tree Blvd.
Jan. 8: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Crown Centre II, 5001 Rockside Rd.
Jan. 13: 1 to 7 p.m., Independence Community Center, 6363 Selig Dr.

Valley View
Jan. 14: 2 to 7 p.m., Valley View Community Center, 6082 Hathaway Rd.

Call Crime Stoppers with anonymous tips

Crime Stoppers encourages members of the community to assist local law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime.

Crime Stoppers provides an anonymous telephone number, Text Tips and Web Tips to encourage citizens to volunteer vital information helpful to law enforcement agencies. By offering anonymity and cash rewards for information leading to indictment or arrests, the program encourages otherwise reluctant callers to provide information.

The 24/7 hotline number, 216-252-7463, allows the caller to remain anonymous. The phone does not have a caller ID function and calls are not recorded.

Those with information can also text TIP657 plus your message to 274637, or can submit information online at www.25crime.com.
Cuyahoga County Board of Elections to hold Job Fair for March 17th presidential primary election

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections is inviting the public to attend a Job Fair on Monday, Jan. 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Cuyahoga County Garage, 2501 Harvard Ave., in Newburgh Heights, as part of its effort to hire over 4,000 individuals to assist voters on Election Day as precinct election officials (PEOs).

In addition, there are openings for ride along officials, drop-off assistants, rovers and over 300 openings for in-house full-time temporary clerks.

The presidential primary election falls on St. Patrick’s Day. “Competition with the holiday is making it a challenge to find all of the people we need to administer this very important election,” said Anthony Perlatti, director of the Board of Elections. “Attending the job fair is a great way to learn about our work and how easy it is to join our great team. There are openings for every skill level, so we will seriously consider every individual who walks through the doors,” said Perlatti.

Precinct election officials earn $172.10 and clerks are paid $11.50 per hour for assignments that can last several weeks to three months dependent on the assignment.

People don’t have to wait for the Job Fair to apply for work. The Board is taking applications now. They may apply by calling 216-443-6600 or online at www.443VOTE.us.

Neighborhood News online

Neighborhood News readers can get their favorite newspaper on the web at: theneighborhoodnews.com.

The entire newspaper is available on the N.N. website every Wednesday morning and can be read in Adobe Acrobat. Just click on the front page to download the remaining pages. Archives and other features will be added as the website evolves.
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PERSONALS

HELP WANTED

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Dear Jesus, our only hope is in you. We are tired of the toil, we have been in the Sicilian economy, we are now in the middle of the city, this is the end of our journey, we ask you to bless us, to make our way home, Amen.

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Maple Heights Job Opening
Economic Development Director
The City of Maple Heights is seeking applicants for a full-time Economic Development Director. Responsibilities include (but not limited to): Implementing all aspects of the City’s business attraction/retention program; Market the City’s office, industrial and retail areas; Serve as liaison to the business community; Develop and administer economic development related grant and incentive programs; and Track regional and national trends.

Applications/Resumes will be accepted at City Hall, 5335 Lee Road, Maple Heights, OH 44137 attention HR or email to jatevansson@mapleheightsohio.com. EO, drug/smoke free workplace. Position is OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

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council thanked the residents of Independence for the opportunity to have served as mayor for the last four years.

To the applause of council and the audience he said, “I am grateful to have served this community with this amazing group of dedicated community-driven people; and I am very proud of the work we have done.”

He said some of his favorite highlights of his time in office include the completion of the Hemlock Trail, Topgolf, Vista Springs, the formation of federal partnerships with the city’s safety forces, and “the generations these projects will benefit for years to come.”

Other legislation passed
Also passed at the December 10th council meeting include:
• Change order for the Upper Brookside Road/Sidewalk Improvements Project;
• Entering into a lease agreement with Independence Cooperative Nursery School for the building at 7121 Valley View Dr.;
• Amending an ordinance establishing benefits for all regular, non-bargaining unit, full-time municipal employees;
• Adopting a five-year capital improvement plan for 2020-2024;
• Entering into an agreement with the International Association of Firefighters, Local 2573, AFL-CIO;
• Entering into a Jobs and Commerce Economic Development Agreement with the State of Ohio, Department of Transportation in connection with the Rockside Woods Boulevard North and Brecksville Road Improvements Project;
• Entering into a Relocation and Job Creation Grant Agreement with Saucy Brew Works, LLC to move its operations to Independence;
• Authorizing an increase in the amount of funds requested from $47,500 to an amount not to exceed $65,000 for professional services by Clemans Nelson & Associates in connection with labor relations, consulting and negotiation;
• Granting a U-3 Special Use Permit to Orbis Education Services for property at 6050 Oak Tree Blvd.

Special council meeting
At a special meeting of Independence Council on December 17th, legislation passed included:
• Renewing the contract of United Survey, Inc. for the city’s 2020 sanitary and storm sewer maintenance and repairs through March 2020, with the city to review prior to March 31, 2020 through December 31, 2020;
Maple Heights Council closes books on 2019, passes 2020 budget

By Judith Goldsworth

Maple Heights closed the books on 2019 by passing several pieces of legislation, including an ordinance for the 2020 budget, at its final meeting of the year last week.

The budget, for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2020, had to be passed by the end of this year and presented to the county fiscal officer by Dec. 31, 2019, the ordinance stated.

Finance Director Tinita Tillman was contacted for the total figure of next year’s budget, but that information was not available as of press time. Council also passed legislation to amend this year’s budget, as recommended by Tillman.

Also regarding financial matters in the city, council passed two resolutions, one authorizing Tillman to change the fiscal year 2018 “Advance of Monies” in the amount of $30,544.57 from the General Fund to the Police Levy Fund, to a “Transfer of Monies” from the General Fund to the Police Levy Fund, “thereby requiring no reimbursement to the General Fund” before the end of this year, the legislation states.

The other resolution authorizes Tillman to correct the internal audit classifications of fiscal year 2018 expenditures in the total amount of $74,500 out of the General Fund to certain Special Revenue Funds (Street Lighting Fund, Ambulance Billing Fund, EMS Grant Fund) from “advances” to “transfers,” therefore requiring no reimbursement to the General Fund before the end of 2019.

Council also passed an ordinance amending existing legislation concerning renewal of rental registrations and tenant rental licenses and establishing fees.

Effective January 1, 2020, each owner of residential and commercial properties in Maple Heights, or the agent in charge of rental units in the city, is required to register all such rental units on a rental registration form, per owner or agent in charge, with the Building Department on an annual basis, no later than March 31 of each calendar year for a non-refundable rental registration fee of $75 per owner or agent in charge, according to the legislation.

The ordinance also states that if the owner or agent in charge acquires additional rental units during the calendar year, then, within 30 days after the date of acquiring ownership or transfer of the title, and while the unit is still vacant, the owner or agent in charge must file an updated rental registration with the Building Department for a nonrefundable fee of $35. The form to be used to register all their rental units will be contained in a rental registration packet available from the Maple Heights Building Department.

As stated in the legislation, tenant forms must be completed and returned to the Building Department by January 31 of each calendar year, and before any tenant shall move into the unit. Also, effective January 1, 2021, upon return of the tenant forms, a tenant rental license fee of $150 per rental unit shall be required to be paid by the owner or agent in charge for the first unit owners, and $35 for each additional unit owned. If there is a change in tenancy in any unit, then updated rental registration must be submitted, and the owner or agent must pay an additional rental registration fee of $35, and pay an additional tenant license fee of $150, according to the ordinance.

Council passed a resolution authorizing Mayor Annette Blackwell to enter into a contract with Medical Mutual of Ohio to provide health insurance to full-time city employees, effective Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2020.

And council also passed a resolution authorizing the Community Life and Education Committee to expend funds to host a City Wide Holiday Party with a toy giveaway for Maple Heights’ youngsters, which was held this past weekend.