



**Martin J. Sweeney**

Cuyahoga County Council District 3

Committee Chair: Council Operations, Intergovernmental Relations & Public Transportation

Committee Vice Chair: Health, Human Services & Aging

Committee Member: Human Resources, Appointments & Equity

Committee Member: Public Works, Procurement & Contracting

December 29, 2022

To: Pernel Jones, Jr., Council President

From: Martin J. Sweeney, Chair, Council Operations, Intergovernmental Relations & Public Transportation Committee

Re: Council Operations Year-End Report - 2022

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Dear Council President Jones,

As part of my responsibilities as Chair of the Council Operations, Intergovernmental Relations & Public Transportation Committee I am submitting this year-end review for calendar year 2022. After speaking with the chief of staff, he assigned Michael King to help me accomplish this year-end review.

The scope of this report is to identify areas for the enhancement of Council Operations and to make recommendations for the coming year. In preparing this report I invited my colleagues to share their candid thoughts and suggestions with me and with Council staff. A complete list of all the feedback we received is included at the end of this report. To respect the candor of my colleagues, these ideas are listed without individual attribution, though I know most members of Council would have no qualms about sharing these ideas publicly as well.

Below are the top priorities I believe should be considered in 2023:

- 1. Improve County Council's visibility and brand.** As a newer member of Council, I am frequently surprised at how little awareness county residents have about the operations of county government, and specifically, the Council. This lack of visibility limits the Council's ability for our constituents to communicate with us and to have a greater voice in how we represent county government.

To this point, Council should consider engaging a brand consultant to comprehensively assess our current visibility and brand and recommend improvements on how to reach these goals we communicate with our constituents

and the press. To that end, my recommendation is to issue a Request for Proposals in the amount of \$250,000 to identify the best ways to meet this goal.

Council should also consider improving its social media presence, publishing regular district-specific newsletters to inform residents about ways county government is working for them, and find other less common forms of communication to give constituents an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback.

- 2. Use Council's oversight role to conduct a deep dive on how the charter county government is working after 12 years in office.** The County Charter went into effect a little over a decade ago, and at the time it was touted as an opportunity for county government to become more ethical, efficient, and effective in how it delivers services. It is time we do a deep dive to see how well this new form of government is working, and whether there are ways it can be improved.

Council should consider hiring an independent third-party to identify meaningful available metrics to evaluate how well the new county government is operating, both in relation to comparable counties throughout Ohio and to the old form of county government (to the extent historical data is available). This review would broadly examine all operations of the county government over which Council has oversight responsibilities, with a particular focus on the delivery of services to county residents.

- 3. Council should establish legislative priorities and remain focused on achieving those goals.** At the start of each new Council, the body should consider establishing a formal process to set both short-term and long-term legislative priorities for the coming session. These priorities could include both substantive policy objectives and areas where the Council intends to focus its oversight responsibilities. While the Council will always be ready to adapt to changing circumstances, these legislative priorities will provide greater clarity of purpose and help set expectations for the coming year(s).

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Below is a comprehensive list of ideas compiled from conversations with members of Council in no particular order:

1. Conduct an overall review of how the new form government has worked – in what ways have we achieved the things that were intended in making the change, and in what ways can it be better?
2. Increase committee turnover, including chairs, to facilitate the generation of new ideas.

3. Establish a norm that the Council president and vice president should serve a maximum of four consecutive years to prevent inertia. Leadership would be able to come back and serve after a period of time.
4. When complex or noteworthy legislation is being considered, committees should hold hearings where interactive testimony is taken and committee members are able to engage in a dialogue with the public.
5. Update the Council website to allow anyone to see the status of a pending piece of legislation, including the current version.
6. Expand and better define the role of the Council vice president.
7. Hold an occasional Council-wide caucus meeting for strategic planning and to allow Council members to better understand each other's views and goals. This caucus meeting would be open to the public.
8. Develop and propose a charter amendment to hold special elections as part of the succession process for members of Council and County Executive.
9. Establish a norm that the Council President and Vice President be from different political parties.
10. Make MetroHealth, the jail, and the Enterprise Resource Planning project as priorities for Council oversight.
11. Responsive communication in a timely manner among all eleven Council members will help improve our deliberation and improve the legislative process.
12. Print the names of members on each committee agenda for easy reference and transparency.
13. Improve communication with the public. Expand Council's social media presence either by hiring a dedicated communications staff person or creating a student internship or fellowship.

This year-end report is respectfully submitted as of December 29, 2022.

Sincerely,



Martin J. Sweeney  
Cuyahoga County Council, District 3

CC:

Cuyahoga County Council  
Joe Nanni, Chief of Staff