

The Council Ledger

AVP Task Force Concludes With Community Report

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On January 27, the County of Summit Abandoned and Vacant Property Task Force presented its **Report to the Community** at the Akron-Summit County Public Library Auditorium. At this event, representatives of the Task Force unveiled their goals for combating the problem of abandoned and vacant properties in the Greater Akron/Summit County community, as well as strategies for implementation.

The Abandoned and Vacant Property Task Force was created in October 2008, by resolution of County Council. Among other duties, the Task Force was charged with finding ways to reduce the number of abandoned and vacant properties in the County, decreasing neighborhood blight and decay, maximizing the use of abandoned and vacant properties and preventing future abandonments and vacancies by

addressing the needs of homeowners who face the loss of their property through foreclosure or other reasons. Chaired by District 5 County Councilman, **Cazzell Smith, Sr.**, the Task Force included representation from the offices of the County Executive, County Council, Fiscal Officer and Consumer Affairs, City of Akron, local mayors, non-profit organizations, lending and real-estate entities and other interested parties.



Councilman Cazzell Smith, Sr. (District 5) addresses the audience during the Summit County Abandoned and Vacant Property Task Force "Report to the Community" at the Main Library Auditorium in downtown Akron.

Having studied this important issue for the last twelve months, the Task Force presented the following goals and recommendations:

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New County Council Officers Elected

At their January 4, 2010 Organizational Meeting, Summit County Council elected **Jon Poda, At Large**, to serve as Council President and **Frank C. Comunale (District 4)** as Vice President for 2010. Poda succeeds Councilman **Nick Kostandaras (District 1)** who served from 2007 through 2009.

In his first term as an At-Large Member on Summit County Council, Poda has chaired the Health and Human Services Committee, Public Works Committee and served as Council Vice-President.

In 2008, Councilman Poda wrote and sponsored legislation forming the Methamphetamine Property

Awareness Task Force which resulted in coordination between law enforcement agencies throughout the county to make information available to homeowners and renters concerning real estate affected by meth labs via the website link <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/SCMA.htm>.

In 2009, he authored legislation that banned texting while driving, which resulted in Summit County being the first county in the state of Ohio to pass such a law making the roads safer for travelers.

"I am honored to serve as President and I thank my colleagues for their support. I look forward

to working together with our Council and Executive Pry to continue to provide effective leadership for the citizens of Summit County in these trying times," said Poda.

Councilman Comunale is serving his second term on County Council representing District 4, which includes part of the City of Akron and part of Cuyahoga Falls. He has served as Vice Chair of the Planning and Economic Development Committee as well as on the Health and Human Services, Long-Term Planning, Public Works and Personnel Committees.



Newly Elected Council Officers, President Jon Poda (At-Large) and Vice President Frank C. Comunale (District 4).

Abandoned and Vacant Homes Task Force Report cont.



AVP Task Force Chair, Councilman Cazzell Smith (District 5) with County Executive Russ Pry (left) Ohio Attorney General, Richard Cordray and Council President Jon Poda (right).

GOAL #1—Develop a Centralized System for Tracking Vacant and Abandoned Properties

Currently, vacant and abandoned property data is stored in separate places that are not easily integrated. A centralized system would increase the ability to determine how many vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed properties actually exist in Summit County.

Goal #2—Enforcement of Existing Codes and Recommendation of More Effective Legislation

This goal would include the development of a Specialty Court to deal with housing issues with a single judge to handle housing cases within the Court's jurisdiction. This would increase the consistency and expediency in resolving housing cases.

GOAL #3—Identify and Make Recommendations Regarding the Best Use of Current Funding Streams Which Can Be Used To Address The Problem and Seek Other Resources to Prevent Abandonments and Vacancies Due to Foreclosure and Other Major Causes

This goal encourages the creation of land banks and continuing to provide foreclosure prevention and financial education to residents who are at risk of losing their homes.

Goal #4—Develop Strategies to Implement Alternate Uses for Existing Abandoned and Vacant Properties

This goal would involve facilitating partnerships and collaborations to encourage the disposition of abandoned and vacant properties; and acquiring properties and returning them to productive use through the development of

green spaces and community gardens, rehabilitation or removal of uninhabitable buildings.

"This Task Force has done a lot of work to address the problem of abandoned and vacant properties in this community. We're looking forward to acting on the information we've found and using resources that we hope to initiate in developing lasting solutions," said Smith.

Special guest, Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray praised the work of the Task Force saying, "abandoned and vacant properties are one of the biggest challenges facing our communities. The recommendations you've made are sensible, intelligent and a good step moving forward. We need to share them with communities throughout the State."

Copies of the report are available online at www.co.summit.oh.us (click on Council tab)



Ohio Attorney General, Richard Cordray answers a question following the AVP Report presentation.

Council Members Help Celebrate League of Women Voters' 90th Birthday



County Executive Russ Pry (left) and County Council Members Jerry Feeman, Ilene Shapiro, Frank Comunale, Paula Prentice and President Jon Poda with Akron LWV officers Sharley Greer (Treasurer), Erica Greer (President) and Diana Kingsbury (President-elect).

On February 2, Council Members Ilene Shapiro (at Large), Gloria Rodgers (District 2), Paula Prentice (District 8), Jerry Feeman (District 6) and Council Officers, President Jon Poda (at Large) and Vice President Frank Comunale (District 4) joined the Akron Chapter of the League of Women Voters at a joint Press Conference with the City of Akron and the County of Summit to recognize the 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters.

Known widely for its voter education efforts, this non-partisan, government watchdog group has been an American institution since 1920.

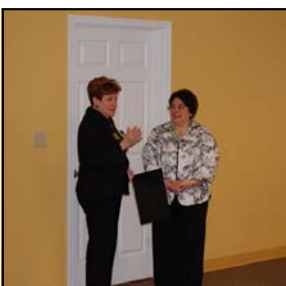
More than 850 state and local Leagues exist across the country today, and the Akron Area Chapter, established in 1940, celebrates its 70th birthday this year.

Held appropriately at the Sojourner Truth Building in downtown Akron (Ms. Truth was an abolitionist and women's rights activist who gave her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech in Akron in 1851), the Conference featured remarks and honors from the office of U.S. Congresswoman Betty Sutton, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown's office, County Executive Russ Pry, City of Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Akron City Council President Marco

Sommerville, County Council President Poda and several remarks from women elected officials including: County Councilwoman Shapiro, Akron City Councilwomen Linda Omobien and Sandra Kurt, Twinsburg Mayor Katherine Procop and a letter of recognition from Pat Milhoff from the University of Akron Women's Study Program.

In its Commendation to the League, the County Council recognized the League of Women Voters of the Akron Area and its instrumental role in helping to establish the Summit County Charter form of government, and, "the courageous women who fought for women's right to vote so that women could take their rightful place in the governance of our nation."

Council Members Visit New Habitat for Humanity Facility



On February 19, Habitat for Humanity of Summit County hosted a Legislative Tour of its new 67,000 square foot facility at 2301 Romig Rd. across from the former Rolling Acres Mall in Southwest Akron. Habitat's offices, warehouse and ReStore retail facility are now all housed under one roof there. Founded in 1987, Habitat has made home ownership a possibility for more than 140 families in Summit County, providing new affordable homes and education for partner families to maintain and keep their homes they've purchased through sweat equity. At left, Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro, a Habitat Steering Committee Member, was on hand to present a Commendation to Executive Director, Rochelle Fisher. At right, Habitat Development Director, Larry Becker conducts a tour with Councilwoman Paula Prentice, Akron City Councilwoman, Linda Omobien, County Council Chief of Staff, Darlene Mims and Councilman Cazzell Smith. Councilman Jerry Feeman also attended the event.





Councilwoman Shapiro Presents Green Task Force “White Paper” To Council

In December, **Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro**, chair of the Summit County Green Policy Task Force presented a “White Paper” report to Summit County Council, outlining the efforts of the Task Force’s three sub-committees dedicated to environmental initiatives related to Green Business Certification, Deconstruction and Demolition, and Community Engagement and Education.

The sub-committees met regularly throughout 2009 and worked on developing objectives and high level action plans to report back to the Summit County Green Policy Task Force through Task Force members who participated on each sub-committee.

Some initiatives suggested by the sub-committees in the “White Paper” included:

- The development of a comprehensive Summit County Green Website
- Adopting legislation incorporating into the County’s procurement process either requirements or preferences for vendors with the County to recycle Construction and Demolition Debris (C&DD) in County related projects for the Department of Administrative Services, Department of Environmental Services (DOES) and the Engineer’s Office.
- Completing a Green Business Survey to determine the current level of environmental practices among businesses ranging from 5 to 500 employees in Summit County, and developing an on-line Green Business Certification program.

“There was a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise at the tables and we were able to share and discuss some ideas that should lead to establishing programs and resources that will benefit this community for generations to come. Our plans and recommendations will be good for the entire community – businesses, residents, developers, students – we want everyone to be more informed to make a difference,” she concluded.

The Summit County Green Policy Task Force will continue to meet in 2010 with the sub-committees continuing to participate as needed. The Task Force White paper is available on the Summit County Go Green page at www.co.summit.oh.us.



Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro, Chair of the Summit County Green Policy Task Force, presents a “White Paper” Status Report on the work of the Task Force and its suggested initiatives for 2010.

Commendations

During Black History Month in February, County Council Members **John Schmidt (District 2)**, **Gloria Rodgers (District 3)** and Former Council President **Nick Kostandaras (District 1)** presented a commendation to Mr. **William Warren**, the first African American Fireman in the Cuyahoga Falls Fire Department. Mr. Warren who recently retired after a 27 year career as a firefighter and paramedic, joined the Falls Fire Department in 1989, and served as a charter member of the De-



partment’s Technical Rescue Operations Team (TROT), specializing in water and high angle rescues and was a valuable member of the City’s CPR and Fire Education program.

Councilman Cazzell Smith, (District 5) presented a commendation to **SPC Javon Mario Robinson**, who served two tours of duty with the US Army as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sgt. Robinson served as a Gunner, Cargo Truck Driver, Fuel Truck Driver and Tower Guard courageously participating in over 300 combat logistic patrol missions in direct support of forward combat elements, transporting class I, III, IV and IX supplies to three combat patrol bases in Samarra, Iraq, while under direct fire, mortar and RPG fire. His dedication, selfless service and



professionalism contributed to turning Ramadi, Iraq from the most dangerous city in the world to an example of American victory in Iraq. Sgt Robinson was medically discharged from service with honor, following injuries suffered in combat.

In The Community



Councilwoman Paula Prentice (District 8) addresses a crowd at the Springfield Township Senior Center during the center’s Senior Meals Program on Feb. 24. Councilwoman Prentice talked about issues such as sewer services

and health care accessibility for area residents, and was joined by representatives from the Department of Environmental Services, Department of Job and Family Services, and the Summit County General Health District. Prentice, who represents Green, Lakemore, Mogadore, Coventry Township and Springfield Township uses the program as a way to hear concerns and other issues that are on the minds of residents in her district.

Summit County Council Vice President Frank Comunale (District 4) was recently invited to speak to employees of the Novus Clinic in Tallmadge on March 1, at their monthly staff meeting.

Councilman Comunale commended the employees on the work they do and how it enriches the lives of residents in Summit County. Councilman Comunale also talked about County government as a valuable resource and encouraged the employees to utilize it, as it affects their daily lives.



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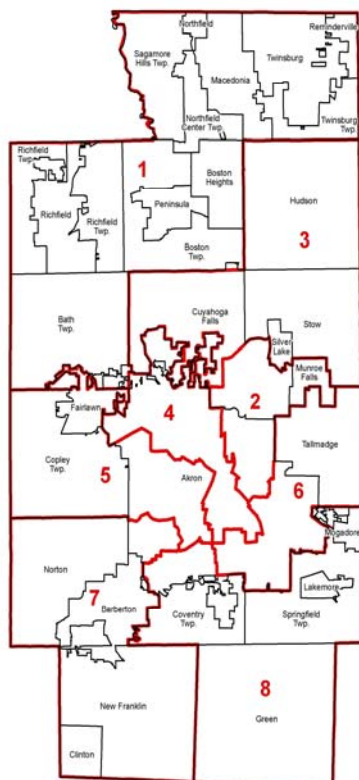


Calendar of Events

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
March 22	Council Committee Mtg.	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
March 29	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
April 5	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
April 12	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
April 19	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
April 26	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
May 3	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
May 10	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
May 17	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
May 24	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
May 26	Summit Co. Green Task Force	Council Chambers	3:45 p.m.
May 31	Offices CLOSED for Memorial Day		
June 7	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.
June 14	Council Meeting	Council Chambers	5:30 p.m.
June 21	Council Committee Meeting	Council Chambers	4:30 p.m.

2010 County Council Members

Nick Kostandaras
District 1
John Schmidt
District 2
Gloria Rodgers
District 3
Frank C. Comunale
District 4
Cazzell Smith, Sr.
District 5
Jerry Feeman
District 6
Tim Crawford
District 7
Paula Prentice
District 8
Pete Crossland
At Large
Jon Poda
At Large
Ilene Shapiro
At Large



County Council Staff

K. Darlene Mims
Chief of Staff
Sharley Greer
Clerk of Council
W. Kent Starks, II
Constituent Services Coordinator
Mark Potter
Senior Research Analyst
Erin Siebel
Executive Assistant

WELCOME FAYLIN!

Faylin Mutch, a graduate student in the Public Administration Department at the University of Akron has recently joined the Council Staff as a Graduate Assistant.